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KONRAD
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Education in the temporarily occupied territory of Ukraine

2025



Analytical report

Education in the temporarily occupied territory of Ukraine. Political aspect

► August 2025

This analytical report was prepared by the Eastern Human Rights Group and the Institute for Strategic Research and Security based on materials collected in August 2025

Cooperation

Publisher:

Konrad Adenauer Foundation Representative Office in Ukraine (Kyiv)

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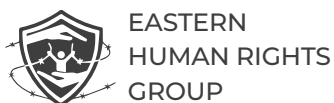
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The publication was prepared as part of the research "Education in the temporarily occupied territory of Ukraine. Political aspect" and "Militarization of industry in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine: infrastructure remains, repressive practices and military-industrial vectors of the Russian Federation". The Eastern Human Rights Group was supported by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation Representative Office in Ukraine (Kyiv).



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Main tasks



The Eastern Human Rights Group (EHRG) is a non-profit organization of lawyers and human rights activists from the eastern regions of Ukraine. Its goal is to protect human rights and monitor the situation in the southeastern regions and in the temporarily occupied territories of the Russian Federation.

The Institute for Strategic Research and Security (ISRS) is an expert association that studies Russian aggression against Ukraine and other countries.

The EHRG and the ISRS operate on the basis of international human rights norms and the Constitution of Ukraine.

Main tasks are:

- › *Protection of human rights in the southeastern regions and occupied territories.*
- › *Collection and analysis of information about violations.*
- › *Informing authorities, international organizations and society.*
- › *Drawing attention to the problems of violations.*
- › *Promoting the development of mechanisms for the protection of rights and compliance with international law.*

Short summary

The full-scale aggression of the RF is accompanied by the systematic implementation of ideological and military control over the education system in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. One of the key tools of influence has been the transformation of schools into spaces of militarization and propaganda, where children from an early age are taught loyalty to the occupying country, the cult of the army, and the perception of Ukraine and the West as enemies. Analysts of the Eastern Human Rights Group and the Institute for Strategic Research and Security, based on open and

closed sources, informant testimonies, materials from educational institutions and education programs, recorded numerous facts of forced militarized education, the creation of cadet and Cossack corps, and the introduction of a religious component through the structure of the ROC of MP. The purpose of the study is to record the scale of ideological pressure, violations of children's rights, and prepare an analytical basis for the legal assessment of these actions at the national and international levels.



War propaganda and militarization of children starting from primary school. Creation of cadet corps in all temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine.

Resume



Introduction of military training lessons in all educational institutions in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine

This analytical report was jointly prepared by the Eastern Human Rights Group and the Institute for Strategic Research and Security. It systematizes information on the transformation of the education system in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine since 2014, with an emphasis on militarization, ideological influence, and religious justification of the occupation policy. The research is based on verified open sources, educational materials, regulatory documents, as well as on the testimonies of eyewitnesses and informants who are in the temporarily occupied territories. The analysts recorded the facts of the suppression of Ukrainian identity, the introduction of mandatory military disciplines in schools, the creation of cadet and Cossack corps, and the use of the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate to

form obedience, aggressive thinking, and a cult of violence among young people. The report pays special attention to the mechanism of forming the image of the enemy—Ukraine, the EU countries, the USA and NATO—as an “existential threat” that “must be fought”. These ideas are systematically implemented through school programs, educational activities and extracurricular military-patriotic clubs. The purpose of the study is to record violations of children’s rights and the norms of international humanitarian law, demonstrate the risks for the future reintegration of the education system, and create an evidence base to hold accountable those involved in ideological and military influence on children under occupation.

Methodology

The methodological basis of this analytical study is an interdisciplinary approach that combines the tools of political science, human rights analysis, critical education research and data verification practices in armed conflict.

The analysis covers the period from 2014 to August 2025 and is aimed at studying the transformation of the educational space in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine under the influence of political, ideological and military practices initiated by the RF as an occupying country.

The work uses both open and closed sources of information. Open sources include official documents, curricula, statements by representatives of occupation administrations, publications in the media, reports of international organizations, video materials and content of educational platforms. Closed sources are the testimonies of teachers, parents of students, graduates of cadet corps and informants from the

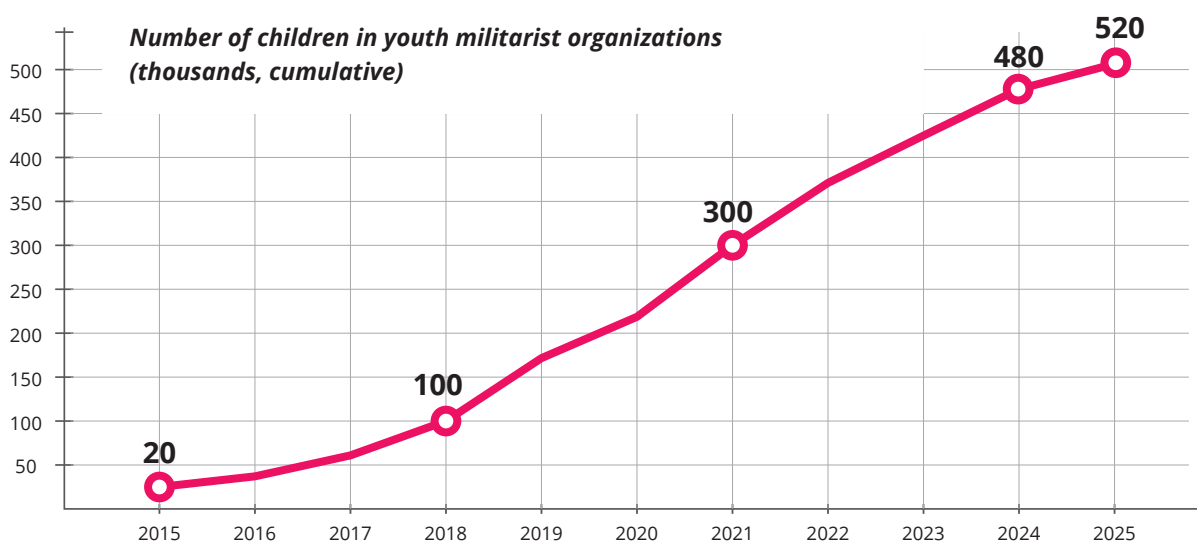
temporarily occupied territories, whose identities are not disclosed for security reasons. Particular attention is paid to the content analysis of educational materials used in the "LPR", "DPR", as well as in the occupied areas of Zaporizhzhia and Kherson Oblasts, including the subjects of history, geography, literature, "Fundamentals of Security and Defense of the Homeland", as well as educational activities and children's media products.

The geography of coverage is all temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. The assessment of the actions of the occupation authorities is carried out based on the norms of international humanitarian law, including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Fourth Geneva Convention. Separately, long-term risks for the Ukrainian education system after de-occupation are analyzed, associated with the deep ideological and military transformation of children and youth during the occupation period.

Introduction

The militarization of children and youth in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine began immediately after the RF seized part of the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts in 2014. Already in the first months of the occupation, dozens of military-patriotic clubs were created, such as "Oleksiivtsi", "Oplot", "Peresvit", "Forpost", "Suvorovets-1", "Patriot of Donbas", "Zastava 58", "Rusky Vedmid", "Sword", "Vityaz", "School of

Courage", etc. Through these structures, teenagers underwent not only combat and physical training, but also mastered tactical movement, storming buildings, camouflage, actions in combat conditions, first aid, handling weapons and simulated means of defeat. The instructors were participants in the hostilities and representatives of the Russian law enforcement agencies



The graph is compiled according to analytical data from the Eastern Human Rights Group from 2014-2025



Special attention was paid to the creation of cadet corps, in which children studied in conditions of complete discipline and subordination. A separate direction was the Cossack cadet corps, where military training was combined with religious training.

From the first days of training, teenagers were involved in rituals, meetings with military priests, participation in services, consecrations of weapons and flags. The Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate took an active part in shaping the image of the "Orthodox warrior"—the defender of "holy Russia", ready for service and self-sacrifice. A clear line can be traced in the educational materials: war is presented as a "heroic duty", the enemy is called Ukraine, the EU countries, the USA

and NATO. Teenagers are prepared not only physically, but also psychologically, forming a stable attitude for armed confrontation with the "external enemy". Thus, the education system in the occupied territories is used as a tool for forming a new, completely loyal youth to the Russian regime—physically prepared, ideologically programmed and religiously motivated to participate in future conflicts.

Research content. Analysis of the creation of militarism in the RF

Education as a tool of militarization: a chronology of the transformation of the Federal State Educational Standards (FSES) under the conditions of the beginning of the transition to a military dictatorship

The militarization of education in the RF is not a spontaneous or situational process. It is the result of a purposeful state policy aimed at transforming the educational sphere into a mechanism for forming obedient, ideologically motivated citizens who are ready to serve the state and participate in military conflicts. The central element of this

transformation was the gradual change of the Federal State Educational Standard (FSES) with an emphasis on military-patriotic education, strengthening the role of religion and eliminating the humanistic content of education. The chronology of the key stages of this process is given below.

2010 Adoption of the first version of the new generation FSES [1].

The foundations of a competency-based approach have been laid, but there is already a formulation about the need to "educate a citizen and a patriot." This has created the prerequisites for future changes aimed at forming loyalty and readiness to serve the country.

2014 Annexation of Crimea and the beginning of the war in Donbas.

"Lessons of courage" are being introduced en masse; military-patriotic circles and camps are expanding. The expansion of such practices into the occupied territories of Ukraine begins. The infrastructure of children's militarization is being formed: military-patriotic clubs, Cossack societies, the first cadet classes. Changes in the FSES have not yet taken place, but the actual militarization of the educational space has already begun.

2016 Establishment of the All-Russian military-patriotic movement "Yunarmiya".

The Russian Ministry of Defense becomes an active player in the educational sphere. Schools are instructed to create "Youth Army" units; participation becomes mandatory in a number of regions. Military-patriotic activities are integrated into extracurricular activities. This is an important step towards the institutionalization of military education.

2018–2019 Updates to the FSES.

Clearer formulations appear: "formation of readiness to defend the Motherland", "awareness of oneself as part of a great country". At the level of standards, patriotic ideology is legalized, and the OBZH (a.k.a. Fundamentals of Life Safety) course receives a new content with an increased emphasis on defense training. These changes lay the foundation for the transformation of the school into an element of the defense system.

2020 Changes to the Education Law

A mandatory educational program is being formed, which includes patriotic, spiritual-moral, and military-historical modules [2]. Emphasis is placed on working with the Russian Orthodox Church and Cossack organizations. These practices are also beginning to be implemented in schools in the occupied territories of Ukraine—with the blessing of the “Ministries of education” of the “LPR” and “DPR.”

2021 Adoption of new editions of the FSES for all levels of general education.

The standards establish the following goals: “cultivating love for the Motherland”, “forming identity based on traditional spiritual and moral values”, “respect for military service and the heroism of ancestors”. Religious and military components become part of the “educational environment”. This means the beginning of the official militarization of education at the level of basic standards.

2022 Invasion of Ukraine and introduction of a new subject

Since the beginning of the full-scale war, the course “Fundamentals of Security and Defense of the Homeland” has been introduced, which includes tactical training, elements of combat service, training in handling weapons, and the heroization of the Russian army. The participation of the “Youth Army” and Cossack formations becomes massive. In the occupied territories of Ukraine, this subject is introduced immediately after the establishment of occupation administrations.

2023–2025 Full institutionalization of the educational dictatorship.

Military and religious educations are becoming key elements of educational policy. The Federal Educational Standard (FSES) is supplemented by instructions on the implementation of spiritual and moral education programs with the mandatory participation of representatives of the ROC of MP. Prayer services, flag consecrations, and religious and military rituals are held in schools and cadet corps. The school system is turning into a component of the military infrastructure, where the educational process serves the goals of mobilization and ideological loyalty. Thus, over the period from 2010 to 2025, Russia has consistently built an education system in which militarism, the cult of service, and ideological obedience occupy a central place. The Federal Educational Standard (FSES) has become a tool for implementing this transformation. The school is no longer perceived as a space for personal development, but functions as a structure for mobilization training. In the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, this model is being used forcibly—as a tool for forming a new generation of citizens deprived of Ukrainian identity and embedded in the system of values of the “Russian world.”

According to analysts from the Eastern Human Rights Group and the Institute for Strategic Research and Security, the modern education system in the RF is viewed not simply as a tool of

ideological influence, but as a key mechanism for the structural transformation of the country from an authoritarian political regime to a model of military dictatorship.

Targeted changes in the Federal State Educational Standard (FSES of the RF)[3] provided a regulatory and methodological framework for [3]:

- *forming in children and adolescents the idea of war as the norm and service to the state as the highest civic virtue*
- *institutionalization of militarized education through the expansion of the network of cadet classes, Cossack corps, military-patriotic clubs, and the "Youth Army"*
- *the sacralization of violence and militarism with the participation of the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate*
- *embedding the educational system into the mobilization vertical, where school becomes the first stage of preparation for a military or "service" role in the state.*



Developing a mobilization vertical, where school becomes the first stage of preparation for military service

According to analytical assessments, such a model allows for the formation of a "soldier of the country"—a submissive, ideologically programmed citizen devoid of critical thinking, incapable of democratic choice and free self-determination. This model is actively exported to the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, where it is implemented through the full implementation of

the RF's Federal Educational Standards, the replacement of Ukrainian educational programs, the introduction of military-patriotic disciplines and religious elements. Education in these conditions becomes not a way of development, but a tool of cognitive occupation and consolidation of the power of the aggressor country in the minds of young people.

General situation regarding the number of students studying in schools in the territories of Ukraine occupied by Russia

In the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, the RF continues to implement a policy of integrating the education system into a single model of authoritarian control. However, demographic indicators, staff shortages, lack of resources, and a general decline in the number of students indicate a deep crisis in the education sector under occupation.

The occupied part of Luhansk Oblast

In 2025, the last bell rang for over 17,000 graduates, of whom over 11,000 were ninth-graders and about 6,000 were eleventh-graders [4]. These figures are lower than in previous years, confirming the trend of population outflow from the Oblast.

560 schools are planning to admit over 8,000 first-graders in the 2025/2026 school year. However, the expected number of applications is also lower than previous figures, reflecting demographic instability [5].

For example, in June 2016, the occupation authorities noted that the number of applications submitted by first-graders was 10,268 [6], which demonstrate a decline in the number of those wishing to study in the occupied territories in conditions of a full-scale war.

The occupied part of Donetsk Oblast

The last bell rang for 23,000 graduates, including over 9,000 eleventh graders and 14,000 ninth graders [7]. Compared to previous years, there has been a decrease in the number of graduates, indicating a steady outflow of the population.

For example, in 2023, occupation information sources noted that “schools of the Donetsk People’s Republic graduated 14,504 ninth-graders, and 9,207 young people officially graduated from 11th grade [8].”

In the new school year, about 145 thousand schoolchildren and 40 thousand preschoolers are expected, but local representatives acknowledge a decline in the birth rate, recording a demographic decline.

The occupied part of Zaporizhzhia Oblast

According to statistics in the Zaporizhzhia Oblast in the 2021-2022 academic year, the number of students in general secondary education institutions is 166.6 thousand people, which indicates a sharp reduction in students in educational institutions.

In 2025, 7,407 students received graduation certificates—4,528 after grade 9 and 2,879 after grade 11. In 2024, these figures were 3,999 and 2,093, respectively [9]. And although the number has increased slightly, a decrease in the number of first-graders is expected—to 3,316 in 2025/2026 compared to 3,345 a year earlier [10]. This confirms the demographic depletion of the Oblast and the outflow of residents.

The occupation authorities emphasize the lack of queues for kindergartens, which is directly related to the reduction in the number of preschool children.

The occupied part of the Kherson Oblast

In 2025, 3,843 graduates graduated from school, of which 2,286 were ninth-graders and 1,557 were eleventh-graders. These data are lower compared to previous years, which indicates a significant reduction in the school contingent. According to statistics, in 2021/2022, the number of students in secondary education institutions in the Kherson Oblast was 113.6 thousand people, which indicates a strong reduction in students in educational institutions.

For the 2025/2026 academic year, it is planned to enroll 21,000 students, including over 2,000 first-graders [11], but even these figures indicate a decrease in the number of school-age children in the Oblast.

In the occupied part of the Kherson Oblast, as of the summer of 2025, there are 106 schools operating, with about 21 thousand children studying. At the same time, there is an acute shortage of teachers (more than 450 vacancies) and a shortage of textbooks and resources [12], which further exacerbates the situation. According to official information from the Main Department of Statistics in the Kherson Oblast (before the occupation of a significant part of the Oblast), in the 2020-2021 academic year, the number of teachers in schools in the Kherson Oblast was 11.3 thousand people in 395 educational institutions [13]. Therefore, in fact, for educational institutions in the occupied territories, the number of which has significantly decreased, there is a shortage of approximately 15-20% of teachers for the main disciplines of the school cycle.



Overall conclusion. All occupied Oblasts are experiencing a demographic decline, expressed in a reduction in the number of graduates, first-graders, and preschoolers. These trends, along with a shortage of personnel and resources, indicate a systemic population outflow and a crisis in the social sphere under the control of the occupation administrations.

Brief description of the situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine.

The importance of education as a tool for influencing the consciousness of the population, especially children and youth

Since the occupation of certain territories of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts in 2014, and later—Kherson and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts after 2022, the RF has begun a systematic dismantling of the Ukrainian educational space and its replacement with its own ideologized and militarized models. The temporary occupation is accompanied not only by physical control over the territories, but also by a deep transformation of the institutions of civil socialization, primarily, school education. Education in these territories from the first years of the occupation was considered a key tool for influencing the consciousness of the population. The school system was quickly subordinated to the control of



Propaganda lessons for forming affiliation with the "Russian world"



Military-themed lessons ("Fundamentals of Homeland Security and Defense")

the so-called "Ministry of Education of the LPR/DPR", and after 2022—integrated into the federal education system of the RF, including the implementation of Russian curricula, teaching according to federal state educational standards (FSES), retraining of teachers and rewriting of textbooks. Special importance in this system is given to children and adolescents. Minors have become the main target of the propaganda and militarization efforts of the occupying authorities, since it is during school age that the formation of identity, a system of values, and basic behavioral attitudes takes place most effectively.

Through education in the occupied territories, the cognitive subordination of future generations is carried out—the introduction of the narrative of the "Russian world", the justification of armed aggression, the heroization of the Russian army and the demonization of Ukraine, Europe and the USA.

The school environment is gradually transformed into a space of ideological processing and preparation for service: military-themed subjects are introduced in schools ("Fundamentals of Security and Defense of the Motherland"), cadet and Cossack corps are formed, elements of

Orthodox-state identity are instilled through interaction with the Russian Orthodox Church. Students are involved in the "Youth Army", participate in events with the participation of representatives of the Russian army, study combat tactics and "lessons of courage", in which aggressive patriotism and militarism are presented as the norm. Thus, education in the temporarily occupied territories is used not simply as a field of study, but as a centralized tool of ideological mobilization aimed at breaking with the Ukrainian civic space and incorporating new generations into the authoritarian, military model of the Russian country.



Participation of schoolchildren in "Youth Army" projects, conducting combat tactics classes and "courage lessons"

Ideological transformation of the educational space

Extraction of Ukrainian identity from the educational process



Mass seizure of Ukrainian textbooks and teaching materials is underway in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine

Since the first months of the occupation of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts, and since 2022, parts of the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts, the RF has been implementing a systematic policy of completely ousting Ukrainian national identity from the educational sector. This policy is aimed at eradicating any manifestations of Ukrainian cultural, historical, linguistic and state subjectivity in the minds of the younger generation. One of the first steps is **the mass seizure of Ukrainian textbooks and teaching materials**. According to reports and testimonies of teachers, during 2014-2023, organized destruction of books printed in the Ukrainian language took place. "Library purges" were carried out in schools in the occupied territories, during which textbooks on the history of Ukraine, Ukrainian literature, geography, as well as all publications containing national symbols, the word "Ukraine" or a positive mention of

independence were seized. These actions were accompanied by public statements by representatives of the occupation administrations about "denazification" and "cleansing from hostile ideology."



In the temporarily occupied territories, law enforcement agencies are involved in the removal of Ukrainian books.

The educational process has been completely translated into Russian educational standards (FSES RF) [14]. The Ukrainian language as a subject has been eliminated, and all subjects are taught exclusively in Russian. Ukrainian history and culture have been replaced by narratives praising the “common history” and “spiritual unity of the Russian people”. In the rhetoric of school materials, Ukraine is presented as an “artificial state”, “anti-Russia”, and its statehood as a mistake or crime.

Particular attention is paid to historical revision. Textbooks used in the temporarily occupied territories emphasize the “liberation mission” of the RF and discredit the entire Ukrainian national liberation discourse. The glorification of Stepan Bandera, the UPA and other elements of the Ukrainian resistance are presented as a manifestation of “fascism”. Instead of Ukrainian holidays, Russian ones are imposed, such as the Day of National Unity, and the Independence Day of Ukraine is completely excluded.

Extracurricular activities have also been transformed in accordance with the occupation agenda. The so-called “lessons of courage,” “patriotic hours,” and “literary and historical



In the temporarily occupied territories, law enforcement agencies are involved in the removal of Ukrainian books

compositions” shape children’s image of the enemy in the person of Ukraine, the EU, and the USA. Schools organize essay and drawing competitions on the themes “I am the heir to the Victory,” “My Motherland is Russia,” and “Novorossiia is the future of Donbas.”



Extracurricular propaganda aimed at portraying Ukraine as an enemy.

Патриотическое воспитание

ГЕРОЯМИ НЕ РОЖДАЮТСЯ... ГЕРОЯМИ СТАНОВЯТСЯ!



Кононов Сергей Вячеславович родился 4 мая 1980 года в Нижнем Новгороде. Сергей был единственным ребенком в семье. В школе Сергей учился хорошо, увлеченно, мечтал стать врачом – хирургом. После окончания средней школы №119, поступил в наш колледж. В 1998 г. он поступает в Нижегородский медицинский институт, позже переходит в Военно-медицинский институт ФСБ России. С января 2005 года Сергей работал врачом-хирургом отделения экстренной помощи госпиталя ГУВД Нижегородской области.

В феврале 2006 г. вместе с мобильным отрядом МВД России был направлен в Ингушетию. Воевал в Чечне. Командировка в Ингушетию трагически оборвалась 3 августа 2006 г. 3 августа 2006 г. в Назрани прогремели выстрелы. Бандиты открыли огонь. Сергей кинулся к больному и закрыл его своим телом. В результате Сергей Кононов и водитель погибли...

12 октября 2010 г., в день образования медицинской службы в войсках МВД, состоялось торжественное открытие мемориальной доски в память Сергея Кононова, врача-воина, на здании госпиталя медицинского отдела тыла ГУВД Нижегородской области.





Introducing patriotic education lessons aimed at displacing Ukrainian identity

At a deeper level, a **new identity is being formed**, in which children are instilled with belonging to the “Russian world” as the only possible cultural and spiritual community. Through the educational process, religious education (including through the Cossack cadet corps and the ROC of MP) and militarized forms of leisure, schoolchildren are brought up in a paradigm of absolute loyalty to the RF, rejection of the Ukrainian past and readiness to fight for the “liberation” of other territories from

“Ukrainian influence”. Thus, the education system in the occupied territories is used not simply as a teaching tool, but as the main channel of cognitive transformation. By displacing Ukrainian identity and replacing it with an imposed imperial and military discourse, Russia seeks to consolidate the occupation not only physically, but also mentally, forming generations loyal to the occupiers and hostile to their own statehood.

Forcing to study history, literature, and geography according to Russian standards

After the occupation of part of the Ukrainian territories, the RF systematically began implementing its educational policy aimed at completely suppressing Ukrainian identity and forming loyalty to the occupation regime in children. The forced transfer to Russian educational standards was accompanied by violence, threats, deportations and the destruction of cultural identity. Orphans and children without parental accompaniment became especially vulnerable. They were sent en masse to educational institutions on the territory of the RF, where they were subjected to ideological indoctrination and deprived of the right to Ukrainian education and culture.



Students in schools in occupied territories are forced to study history and literature according to Russian standards

Below are specific documented cases of children being forced to study Russian programs

- 1. Lisa Batsura (16 years old, Kherson-Henichesk)**
In early 2023, Lisa was transferred from occupied Crimea to a boarding school in Henichesk. There, she was forced to follow a Russian educational program, was forbidden to wear Ukrainian colors, was forced to learn the Russian anthem, and was offered admission to Russian universities. The girl witnessed a visit by the Russian Ombudsman for Children, Maria Lvova-Belova, which was accompanied by propaganda of the "Russian world."
- 2. Zorik Ibryan (16 years old, Kherson-Henichesk)**
Zorik, like Lisa, ended up at School No. 27 in Henichesk, where he was transferred from Crimea. There, he was subjected to Russification, ideological pressure, and education exclusively according to the Russian curriculum.
- 3. Nastya (teenager, Kherson-Henichesk)**
A high school student who reported on forced Russian education and the suppression of Ukrainian culture. She also turned out to be a participant in propaganda events involving representatives of the occupation administration.
- 4. Mykyta (10 years old, Kherson)**
After the capture of Kherson, Mykyta was deported to the RF, where he was enrolled in a school with a completely Russian educational program. There, he was instilled that Ukraine was the enemy and Russia was the true Motherland. History and literature lessons contained a biased narrative in the spirit of Kremlin propaganda.

5. Diana (14 years old, Kherson)

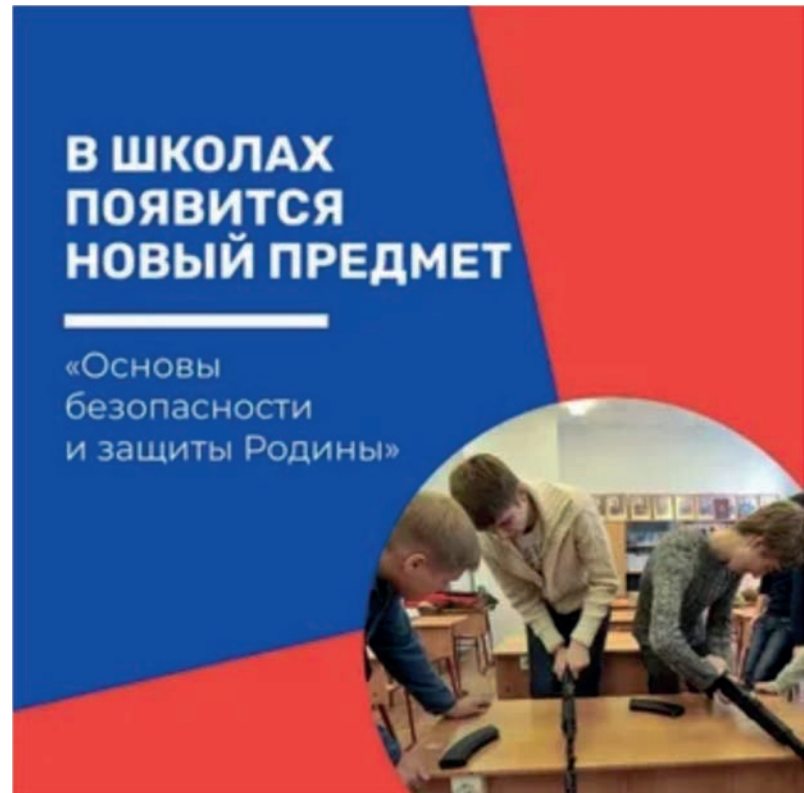
After deportation, she was sent to a Russian boarding school, where she was publicly humiliated for refusing to sing the Russian national anthem. The girl's notebook with Ukrainian symbols was taken away. She was forced to participate in events designed to demonstrate loyalty to Russia.

6. Yana (11 years old, Kherson)

At the school she was sent to after her deportation, she was forbidden to speak Ukrainian. For attempting to use her native language, she was forced to write an explanatory note and promise "not to speak the language of the Nazis anymore." She was also shown propaganda videos about the Russian army and the "mission of the defenders of the Motherland."

7. Unidentified child (from the same family)

The fourth child from the Batsur family was sent to a separate institution in the RF, where her name and date of birth were changed, and later prepared for entry into the cadet corps. The institution's main focus was on military training and ideological loyalty.



The occupation authorities are implementing lessons on "the basics of security and homeland defense"



The cases described above demonstrate the deliberate destruction of Ukrainian identity through the education system. The imposition of Russian educational standards, the forced erasure of cultural memory, and the physical transfer of children to Russian institutions are all part of a strategy of cognitive subordination and long-term occupation. Russian education in the occupied territories is used not as a tool for development, but as a mechanism for forced integration and control.

Repressions against teachers during the occupation



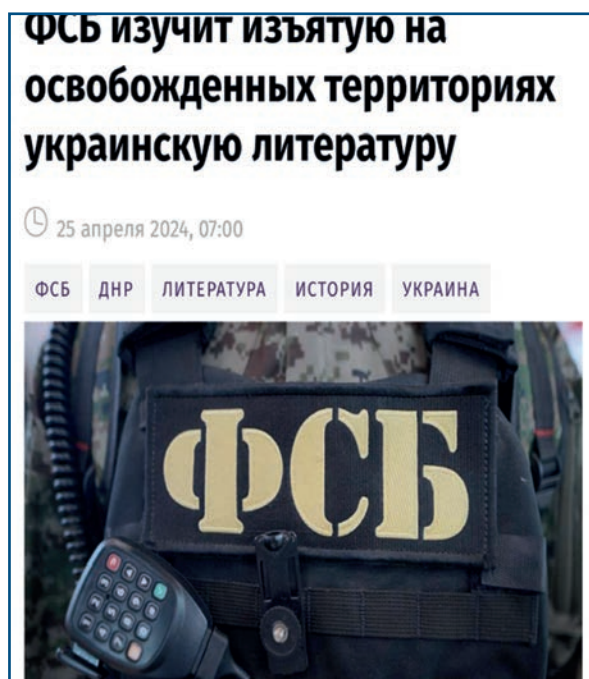
Conducting "Lessons of Courage" is mandatory for all educational institutions in the occupied territories of Ukraine

In the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, the Russian occupation authorities apply systemic pressure not only on students, but also on teachers who refuse to participate in the imposition of Russian educational and ideological policies. Teachers who demonstrate loyalty to the Ukrainian educational system are subjected to harassment, blackmail, threats, and physical violence by representatives of the occupation administrations, special services, and so-called "ideological advisors"—persons who are officially appointed curators of ideological control in schools. The main task of these "ideological advisors" is not pedagogical work, but control over the political loyalty of staff and students. They are engaged in conducting propaganda events, such as

"Conversations about Important Things," "Lessons of Courage," monitor the ideological "purity" of the educational process, identify disloyal teachers, and pass on information about them to law enforcement agencies and special services of the RF. In a number of cases, it was on their initiative that searches of teachers' homes, seizure of literature, dismissals and arrests took place. Russian special services are actively involved in repressions against teachers. Cases of searches, beatings, intimidation, use of electric shocks, arrests and deportations have been recorded. Teachers are forced to participate in the Russian education system, to sign contracts with occupation structures, to teach using Russian textbooks and to abandon the Ukrainian language.

Below are specific examples of teachers who have experienced pressure and repression in the occupied territories:

1. **Serhiy Serdyuk** is the principal of a school in the village of Komysh Zorya, Zaporizhzhia Oblast. He refused to implement the Russian curriculum, after which the school was closed and the teachers were forced to resign. In 2025, he was deported with his family to the RF. He was banned from entering the country for 40 years, and his daughter—for 50 years.
2. **Tetiana (pseudonym)** is a history teacher from Kherson Oblast. She was forced to flee in June 2022 after the director began forcing her to teach using Russian textbooks. Her husband remained under constant pressure and threats of confiscation of documents.
3. **Olena** is the Head of a school in Zaporizhzhia Oblast. She removed information about the school from social media, hid real data, and worked with two sets of documents to avoid falling under the suspicion of the occupiers.
4. **Svitlana (38 years old)** is a teacher of Ukrainian language and literature, Mykolaiv Oblast. She hid her profession, calling herself a cleaner, to avoid being forced to teach according to the Russian curriculum.
5. **Olha (40 years old)** is a history teacher from Kharkiv Oblast. During a search of her house, soldiers burned textbooks and Ukrainian symbols. She tried to hide Ukrainian books and maps from the invaders.
6. **Anna (pseudonym)** is a history teacher who left the village and continued to teach Ukrainian material remotely from the UK. The occupiers replaced her lessons with Russian historiography, and Ukrainian textbooks were destroyed.



Russia's FSB actively participates in confiscating Ukrainian textbooks and creating an image of the enemy



These cases testify to a targeted campaign to oust Ukrainian teachers who resisted the occupation regime and to replace the education system with an instrument of ideological mobilization. School in the occupied territories has been transformed into a mechanism of forced loyalty, where even teachers become objects of repression and pressure, rather than subjects of education.

Integrating political propaganda into the educational context

In the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, the RF systematically introduces elements of an ultra-right political system into the educational process, disguised as the concept of so-called "traditional values". This is not a neutral cultural program, but an ideological tool aimed at forming a submissive generation, loyal to the authoritarian regime and hostile to the ideas of freedom, democracy and Ukrainian identity.

The Russian occupation administration is destroying the remnants of the Ukrainian educational environment and in its place is building a vertically controlled ideological model, in which the school is transformed into a workshop for political mobilization. The educational process is built around three pillars: the cult of the state, the militarization of consciousness and ultra-conservative socio-religious discipline.



The Russian Orthodox Church is one of the instruments of ideological propaganda



Lectures on the ideological education of youth are being held in educational institutions in the occupied territory of Ukraine.

All this forms a new political identity [15], based on the principles of far-right authoritarianism, where the student is perceived not as a subject of education, but as a preparation for the future subject of the dictatorship.

First, children are instilled with a cult of the country and the leader from an early age. Portraits of Putin are hung in schools, the Russian anthem is played, and Russian symbols are spread. In classes such as "Conversations about the Important," "Lessons of Courage," and "Reunification Day," a narrative about Russia as a "civilizational core" waging a "holy war with the West and Ukrainian Nazism" is imposed on schoolchildren [16].

All critical thinking is replaced by the ritualized repetition of ideological formulas, and any doubts about the official position are interpreted as treason.



In new textbooks, the identity of a subject of an authoritarian dictator is being formed.

Secondly, the cult of war as the basis of political consciousness is introduced into the educational space. War is presented as a form of feat, and death for the state is presented as the "highest mission of a man". Paramilitary training is conducted in schools, a system of cadet and Cossack corps operates, children march, learn the basics of combat, and swear allegiance to the Motherland [17]. Through such structures, students are taught subordination, discipline, and the idea that a person's value is measured by their willingness to serve the system. Cossack corps are especially dangerous as carriers of pseudo-imperial ideology: here, a child is taught from an early age that he is a "soldier of the Orthodox country," that their task is to defend "true values" and fight the "internal enemy" and the "rotten West." These are not military schools—they are ideological factories that produce future agents of a repressive regime of the RF.

Thirdly, under the pretext of "returning to traditions," an ultra-conservative model of society is imposed on children, in which hierarchy, patriarchy, and religious dogmatism are presented as the only possible norm. Here, a woman is exclusively a mother, a man is a warrior, and a child is a silent performer. The right to individuality, personal freedom, and self-expression is replaced by a cult of

duty, subordination, and sacrifice. A special role in this process is played by the so-called "ideological advisors" to school principals. These individuals control the entire "educational" agenda, check the loyalty of teachers, initiate ideological measures, and report "disciplinary deviations." They are the connecting link between the education system and security agencies, effectively performing the functions of supervisors within the school space.



Popularization of war among children through the covers of school notebooks



Imposing traditional family values and patriarchy.

This is constantly monitored by the Russian special services: FSB officers participate in inspections, conduct interviews with teachers, and monitor the information security of schools [18]. The threat of dismissal, arrest, or deportation is present over anyone who does not demonstrate "proper" loyalty. Thus, from an early age, a child finds themselves in an environment where fear, obedience, and ideological training become the norm. The result of this system is not just the replacement of the educational process with propaganda, but the reproduction of dictatorship through school. Children do not learn, but are raised as instruments of the regime: they do not think, but obey. This is not education, this is an industry for creating a new generation of bearers of an authoritarian identity.



The seizure and destruction of Ukrainian textbooks is taking place under strict control of the FSB

Propaganda through educational materials (specific examples)

The political education of young people in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine is systemic, ideologically rigid, and aimed at forming loyalty to the Russian regime [19]. Through school curricula, teaching aids, military-patriotic courses, and public events, the image of the "Russian world" as a "natural" and "desirable" form of political existence is imposed on young people. Elements of militarism, anti-Western rhetoric, glorification of the authoritarian vertical of power, and discrediting Ukrainian statehood are integrated into the

educational process [20]. The key goal is not only to undermine Ukrainian identity, but also to form a new generation that is ready to participate in the implementation of the political and military tasks of the RF. Young people learn to perceive democracy as an "external threat," the West as an enemy, and critical thinking is replaced by loyalty, discipline, and ideological devotion. Thus, political education becomes a tool for integrating the occupied territories into the Russian ideological and political space.



The Russian Federation is actively replacing Ukrainian literature with propaganda literature, thereby erasing Ukrainian identity among young people.

Examples of integration of changes in political orientation in children and youth in the temporarily occupied territory of Ukraine by the RF:

"Methodological materials on the prevention of destructive information influence" (2024)

Developer: Roskomnadzor, Ministry of Education of the RF

Description: Materials intended for school use in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. They systematically label Ukrainian and Western media outlets as sources of "hostile disinformation" that undermine the "spiritual ties" and national security of Russia. Schoolchildren are instilled with the idea that alternative points of view and criticism of the actions of the RF are manifestations of hostile propaganda. Through these materials, the political ideology of militarized authoritarianism is introduced, in which freedom of speech is replaced by "informational vigilance" and public control—by reporting.

Special attention is paid to **play-based lessons**, including role-playing, such as "The Trial of Ukrainian Nazis," where children play the roles of "prosecutors," "judges," and "defendants." These activities purposefully transform the child's political identity, reinforcing the image of Ukraine as an enemy and shaping attitudes toward confrontation, repressive thinking, and uncritical loyalty to the Russian country.

Example: In a practical assignment, students are asked to report to adults if someone is spreading "questionable information" about Russia, its army, or government. This practice develops in children the skill of political denunciation and loyalty to a repressive country. Game elements enhance the effect, transforming ideological influence into an emotionally meaningful personal experience that lays the foundations for a future authoritarian political identity.

"Comprehensive Plan to Counteract the Ideology of Extremism" (2024)

Developer: Administration of the President of the RF

Description: The document, which is being implemented in educational institutions in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, is aimed at establishing strict ideological control over students. Democratic and pro-Ukrainian views are equated with extremism, criticism of the Russian authorities is perceived as a threat to country security. Through this plan, repressions in the educational environment and the suppression of dissent are institutionalized. The course is being promoted towards authoritarian mobilization of youth and the formation of total subordination to the ideology of "the country as an absolute value". A model of political ideology close to post-Soviet neo-Stalinism is being imposed, where the rule of law, freedom of speech and pluralism are replaced by the ideals of centralized power, "scrip", anti-Westernism and anti-Ukrainianism.

Example: A system of monitoring students is being introduced, recording manifestations of "ideological unreliability", refusal to participate in country events, and revealing a critical attitude towards official politics. Students with "deviant" views become objects of educational pressure.

"Methodological recommendations for lessons 'Conversations about important things'"

Developer: Ministry of Education of the RF, Russian Society "Knowledge".

Description: A cycle of propaganda lessons that are systematically implemented in schools in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. The main goal is to form in children political loyalty to the course of Putin's neoconservative authoritarianism, which combines imperial ideology, anti-Westernism, militarism and the cult of the country. Through narratives about the "fight against evil" (where Ukraine and the "collective West" are evil), propaganda of "heroes of the SMO", "traditional values" and the "Russian world", young people are instilled in subordination to centralized power, rejection of democratic principles and critical thinking.

Example: The lesson "Our Defenders: Heroes of the SMO" includes exercises on the topic of "readiness for a feat in the name of Russia" and combating "harmful information," which refers to any critical statements about the Kremlin's course, the actions of the Russian army, or cooperation with Western countries.

"Special military operation. Social and legal support measures..." (INRTU, 2024)

Developer: Irkutsk National Research Technical University (INRTU)

Description: A manual that is actively distributed in schools, including the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. Contains propaganda legitimization of the war against Ukraine, presenting the "special military operation" as just and necessary. Through the heroization of the military, the participation of children in actions and patriotic events, emotional and ideological attachment to the Russian military course is formed.

The manual introduces a model of **ultra-patriotic, militaristic ideology**, in which the war with Ukraine is interpreted as a mission to protect the "Russian world." The key goal is to form political loyalty to the current regime and cultivate a sense of involvement in military actions.

Example: "SMO heroes' corners" are organized in schools, children write "letters to soldiers" en masse, and events are held under the slogan "We are with the army." Such practices normalize militarism, blur the line between civilian and military, and prepare young people to participate in future mobilization and propaganda initiatives.

Concept of youth policy and educational activities for 2025-2027"

Developer: Ministry of Education of the RF, Rosmolod

Description: A programmatic document used in temporarily occupied territories to educate youth in anti-Ukrainian rhetoric, rejection of the West, and readiness for "civic mobilization." The central focus is on forming loyalty among youth to Russian authoritarian statehood, which replaces democratic values with the cult of country power, a sacralized notion of "greater Russia," and the representation of the West as a hostile civilization.

Example: Groups are being formed in school groups whose tasks are to "monitor information threats" and participate in "exposing anti-country rhetoric," which contributes to the early inclusion of youth in the system of political surveillance and ideological control.

"Organization of Russian Space: Meanings, Limits, Practices" (2023)

Developer: Institute of Heritage and the Soviet World (IHSW)

Description: An ideological concept used in the system of school and extracurricular education in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. The document is aimed at inserting the "right" political and cultural identity in children and adolescents, introducing the idea that Ukrainian statehood, language, and culture are "artificial," "anti-Russian," and "hostile" constructs.

Through educational and upbringing practices, the image of "historical Russia" is formed as the only legitimate civilizational project. An imperial political ideology is imposed on children, in which Ukraine is denied as a subject of international politics, and its manifestations are interpreted as a consequence of external influence of the West. Such an approach replaces the national identity of schoolchildren with the concept of the "Russian world", depriving them of their historical right to self-identification.

Example: "Our child should not doubt who they are, where they come from and what they live for. The rest is from the evil one." This phrase is a manifestation of an authoritarian approach to education that excludes pluralism, freedom of thought and individual choice. Education is perceived as a tool for forming an ideologically loyal generation capable of participating in projects of territorial and political expansion

"Integration of Novorossia: Ideology, Culture, Politics" (July 2024)

Developer: Institute of CIS Countries, Administration of the President of the RF.

Description: An ideological brochure distributed in educational institutions in the temporarily occupied territories. It is a methodological material aimed at the political education of children and adolescents in the spirit of intolerance towards Ukraine, democracy and Western civilization. The document introduces a clear dichotomy of "us-them", where "us" is identified with "Novorossiya", "Russian world" and "truth", and "they"—with "Ukrainian Nazism", "Western aggression" and "destruction of traditions". Schoolchildren are taught that heroism is serving the "Motherland" through support for the SMO, and criticism of the Russian authorities and pacifism is a manifestation of treason.

The brochure is part of a system of authoritarian political identity formation, in which students are taught to perceive state propaganda as truth and dissent—as a threat. The ideology of imperial revanchism is introduced, which justifies the annexation of Ukrainian territories, revives the idea of "Novorossiya," and positions teachers as "conductors of the state will."

Example: "Teachers are the leaders of the ideology of victory, and children's groups are the centers of the patriotic front." Such rhetoric transforms the educational environment into a mobilization-type structure, where schools become instruments of ideological preparation of the younger generation to participate in supporting the authoritarian regime.

Overall conclusion for this section

In the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, Russia has launched a large-scale campaign of political education of youth, using the education system as a tool of ideological subordination. Through textbooks, methodological recommendations, conceptual documents and special trainings, attitudes aimed at glorifying the Russian army, justifying the war against Ukraine, forming hatred for the West and Ukraine, as well as complete subordination to the country are imposed on schoolchildren and students.

Documents such as “Methodological recommendations for lessons 'Conversations about important'” [21], “A comprehensive plan for countering the ideology of extremism” [22], “The concept of youth policy and educational activities for 2025-2027” [23][24], “Integration of Novorossia: ideology, culture, politics” and others are developed by the Ministry of Education of the RF, the Presidential Administration, Roskomnadzor, the Institute of CIS countries, Rosmolodyozh, INRTU and other quasi-country structures. They are directly implemented in school and university practice in the



Formation of hatred towards Ukraine through propaganda pseudo theories



Methodological recommendations for the formation of the “correct” identity in children and youth

occupied territories of Ukraine [25]. Special attention is paid to the formation of the “correct” political identity of the child: through game lessons, pseudo-patriotic events, tasks for reporting and combating “information threats”, students are taught to perceive dissent as hostile activity, and freedom of speech—as a threat to country security. Democratic ideas are declared extremist and Western culture—as alien and destructive. Thus, a systemic transformation of the educational environment into a mechanism of ideological mobilization takes place. The school is transformed into a tool for forming a new type of citizen—loyal, obedient, ready for self-sacrifice and participating in military operations as the highest form of service to the country. Taken together, all these practices form a stable model of neo-Eurasian ultra-authoritarian political ideology, which combines the cult of power and the country, militarism, anti-Western and anti-Ukrainian narratives, the denial of democratic values, and support for the authoritarian vertical of power. Youth in the occupied territories are purposefully educated in the spirit of this ideology, which makes the education process not a means of personal development, but an instrument of political subordination.

Military-patriotic education: policy of militarization of education

Military-patriotic education as a tool for militarizing education in temporarily occupied territories since 2022 [26].



Militarization of youth in occupied territories. Preparation for combat, weapons skills.

After the start of full-scale aggression against Ukraine in 2022, the RF began a large-scale transformation of the education system in the temporarily occupied territories. One of the key areas of this transformation was military-patriotic education, which is used as a means of forming a loyal, manageable and ideologically subordinate generation. The militarization of education in this context performs not only an educational but also a political function—it forms a new identity compatible with the ideologies of neo-Eurasian authoritarianism. Military-profile disciplines are being massively introduced in the occupied territories of Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Luhansk and Donetsk Oblasts: “Fundamentals of Military Training”, “Initial Military Training”, “Fundamentals of Security and Defense of

the Motherland”, “Conversations about Important Things” and other propaganda courses. They include elements of combat and physical training, training in the handling of weapons, tactical medicine and the basics of military service. The courses emphasize the heroism of the participants of the so-called “SMO”, instill the idea of the “justice” of Russian aggression and the obligation of service to the country. These formations do not simply supplement the educational process, but become its core. Children participate in rituals that have a militaristic character: they raise the flag of the RF, sing the anthem, visit museums of military glory, write letters to the “heroes of the SMO” and participate in the actions “We are with the army”, “Letter to a soldier”, “A lesson in courage” and others.

Schools and children's groups are being subjected to symbolic militarization: SMO corners, stands with photographs of fallen soldiers, boards of honor and stands of "special operations heroes" are being placed in institutions. A school uniform resembling an army uniform is being introduced, drill classes, endurance competitions and "military-patriotic gatherings" are being held. All this forms in children and adolescents not only a habit of hierarchy, subordination and discipline, but also cultivates the image of a "soldier of the system"—an individual who is fully integrated into the structure and ready to sacrifice "in the name of the Motherland". Additionally, through the "Methodological Recommendations", "Plans for Counteracting the Ideology of Extremism" and "Materials for Preventing Destructive Information Influence", an attitude of ideological vigilance is being imposed on students. They are instilled with the idea that any dissent is a manifestation of hostile propaganda. Schoolchildren are encouraged to report on their peers and adults who spread "questionable information" about the actions of the RF. The practice of reporting becomes part of "informational patriotism." A separate form of political influence is becoming game practices, such as the "trial of Ukrainian Nazis," where schoolchildren play quasi-judicial performances with ideologically assigned roles that reinforce the idea of the enemy and the "justice of the Russian mission." Such games are aimed at the final destruction of Ukrainian political identity and the formation of a stable image of the enemy in the person of Ukraine and the West in children.



In addition to practical classes, schools also conduct ideological classes, the purpose of which is to form young people loyal to the occupation authorities.



Military field exercises are held several times a year.

➤ *Thus, military-patriotic education in the occupied Oblasts is not a neutral form of civic education, as it is officially claimed. It is an instrument of political subordination, reproduction of authoritarian ideology, and the formation of a generation that perceives war as a natural and necessary country. This is a system in which education has been transformed into a mechanism for legitimizing violence, and school is a training ground for future executors of repressive policies.*

The ideological model that is being formed as a result of such policies can be characterized as ultra-authoritarian neo-Eurasian militarism, combining:

- › the cult of the country and the leader
- › the militarization of everyday life
- › the ideology of the "besieged fortress"
- › the imperialist mythology of the "Russian world"
- › intolerance of dissent and Western democratic values

Military-patriotic education in the occupied territories has become part of a broad system of political violence over consciousness, aimed at reformatting the identity of Ukrainian children and adolescents in accordance with the Kremlin's political goals.



The militarization of children occurs through the introduction of new school subjects

Specific examples:

"Rules of Life in War (SMO)"

Developer: Public Chamber of the RF with the support of the Ministry of Defense of the RF

Description: A manual distributed among children in temporarily occupied territories promotes participation in war as a "moral norm". Ukraine is presented as an enemy, fighting against which is a matter of "honor".

Example: Children are asked to formulate how they can help the SMO soldiers and resist enemy lies.

"Dialogue on the Mission of the SMO" (methodological materials, 2023)

Developer: Ministry of Education of the RF, Institute of Strategic Research and Forecasts, RUDN University.

Description: Methodological recommendations that are actively distributed in schools in the occupied territories are aimed at glorifying the SMO, identifying Ukraine with the enemy, and presenting the West as a source of threats.

Example: Task: "Compare the exploits of the heroes of the SMO and the defenders of the Motherland during the Great Patriotic War. Why is it important to remember their deeds?"

"Electronic warfare—a textbook of 2025"

Developer: Ministry of Defense of the RF, Union of Donbas Volunteers

Description: A textbook that presents teenagers as participants in an information war against Ukraine and the West. It encourages the practice of whistleblowing and ideological activism among schoolchildren.

Example: The section "The Enemy in the Smartphone" calls on schoolchildren to report "hostile sources" and "foreign agents of influence."



For children of all age groups, psychological readiness for participation in military operations is created

Institutionalized involvement of youth in supporting SMO

According to the document "Information on the experience of preventive work of educational organizations with students of the LPR, DPR, KHO, ZO" (2024), associations such as "Youth Army", "Victory Volunteers", and "Movement of the First" are actively being formed in schools and colleges. These structures are involved in organizing rallies, flash mobs, exhibitions, "Lessons of Courage" and meetings with servicemen of the SMO. Such events are not only educational, but also mobilization in nature: they cultivate the heroization of war and the soldier, instill respect for military service, and also legitimize Russia's participation in aggression against Ukraine.

Creating psychological readiness for participation in military operations

In a number of cases, facts have been recorded when students participated in the production of camouflage nets, the collection of humanitarian aid for the army, the holding of the "Letter to a Soldier" and "We are with the Army" campaigns, and the formation of "Corners of Heroes of the SMO" in schools. These actions form loyalty to the Russian army and encourage emotional fusion with the images of fighting soldiers, creating the prerequisites for their subsequent entry into the ranks of the Russian Armed Forces.



One of the methods of militarization of youth is territorial military Cossack societies (VKT).

Advocacy manuals as an engagement tool

The document "SMO-2 Brochure" contains materials that popularize the participation of young people in a "special military operation", including stories of "teenage heroes" who have undergone voluntary service or volunteer training. Such images are presented as an example to follow. Special attention is paid to the formation of a "sense of duty" among schoolchildren to the "country" and the "Russian people".

Prevention and "patriotic support" of the draft campaign

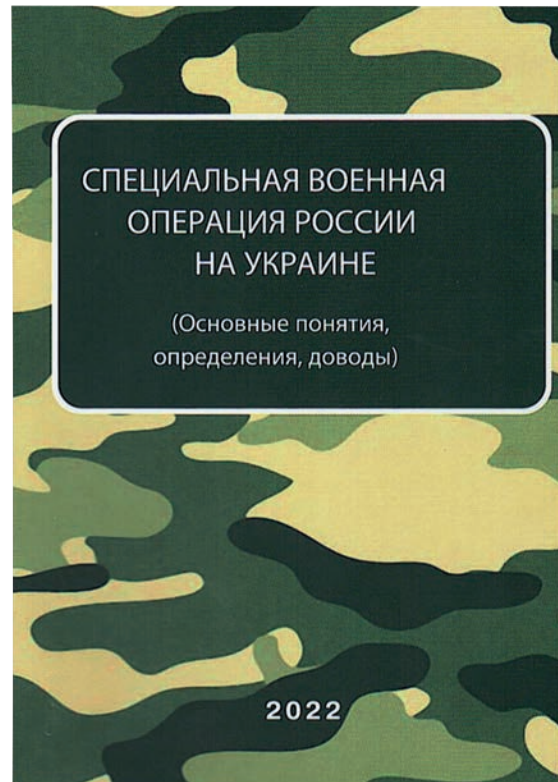
The materials from the report "Action10626-112442.pdf" indicate that employees of educational institutions organize conversations with young people about the "honor of military service" and the benefits of mobilization. In some cases, the administration of schools and colleges directly promotes the involvement of graduates in military registration and enlistment offices. The participation of teachers in this process gives it legitimacy and reduces student resistance.

Political and ideological context

All of the above actions are embedded within the framework of a political ideology of the ultra-authoritarian neo-Eurasian type. At the heart of this model is the cult of the country, militarism, quasi-religious devotion to the "historical mission of Russia" and a complete denial of Western liberal values. The youth is formed as a loyal and obedient element of the political machine, ready for mobilization, which does not ask questions and perceives war as a "sacred duty."



Children from temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine are being forced to donate blood



In textbooks for schoolchildren and students, participation in "SVO" is popularized



Conclusion. Since 2022, a systematic campaign to militarize young people and their ideological preparation for participation in hostilities has been observed in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. Under the guise of patriotic education, mobilization work is being carried out; attitudes towards service in the Russian army and the heroization of violence are being formed. Schoolchildren and students are involved in the infrastructure of the SMO and become part of a quasi-military context, in which they are perceived as a resource for military and propaganda needs. This indicates a targeted policy of involving young people in support, and in some cases, participation in military aggression.

Mandatory military disciplines in schools and out-of-school institutions

Since 2022, military disciplines have been systematically introduced into school and extracurricular education in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine by the RF. The central element of this transformation has been the introduction of the subject “Fundamentals of Homeland Security and Defense” [27] (OBZH) for students in grades 8-11. This course is a revised and expanded version of the former OBZH with an increased emphasis on initial military training: students learn to disassemble and assemble assault rifles, study tactical medicine, orientation, actions when using UAVs, and the basics of combat training. Mandatory training sessions at training grounds that simulate real army conditions are planned for grades 8 and 10.



In military training classes, students are taught how to properly use firearms.

ОБРАЗОВАНИЕ / ШКОЛА / ШКОЛЬНЫЕ ПРЕДМЕТЫ /
ОСНОВЫ БЕЗОПАСНОСТИ И ЗАЩИТА РОДИНЫ В 2025 – 2026 ГОДУ

Основы безопасности и защита Родины в 2025 – 2026 году

С каждым годом все больше школьных дисциплин претерпевают изменения, подстраиваясь под современные реалии. Каким будет новый предмет «основы безопасности и защита Родины» в 2025 – 2026 году – разбираемся вместе с экспертами

The number of military training lessons will be increased in the new academic year

In addition to the school curriculum, regular “Conversations about what is important” are actively used, aimed at forming a militaristic worldview, heroizing the participants of the “SMO” and introducing anti-Ukrainian narratives [28]. Schoolchildren are encouraged to join the “Youth Army”, “Eagles of Russia”, “Movement of the First”, which complements the educational process with a system of informal military education. Since 2023, cadet classes have also been operating at schools, where children study according to special programs under the supervision of the Russian Guard and the Ministry of Defense of the RF. They study fire, combat, physical and tactical training. Thus, military disciplines are integrated into each level of school and extracurricular education.

Implementation of Russian programs with a militaristic bias.

The Russian occupation administrations have carried out a complete transformation of the educational system of the occupied territories in accordance with the Federal Educational Standards of the RF (FSES). All schools have been transferred to the Russian curriculum; the Ukrainian language has been replaced, and the teaching of Ukrainian history and literature has been discontinued.

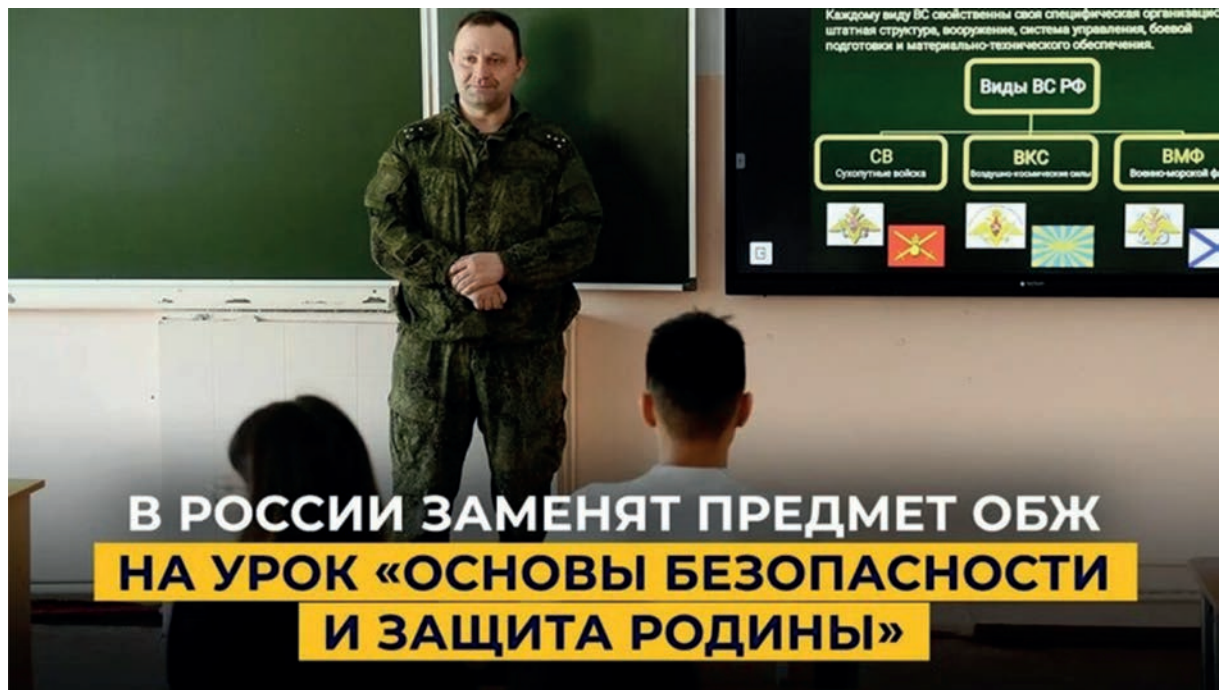
Emphasis is placed on the formation of students' identity as citizens of the RF, ready to defend its interests. As part of this transformation, the Russian Ministry of education coordinates the distribution of teaching aids and scenarios with a clearly expressed military and ideological content. On a regular basis, schools receive teaching aids for patriotic events, dictations and competitions dedicated to the army, war heroes, the "liberation of Donbas", etc. Every week, all schools hold events aimed at legitimizing the war and mobilizing support among young people. Under the guise of career guidance, courses such as "Russia is my horizons" are being introduced, which orient teenagers towards entering military universities and serving in the security forces.



Teenagers are being guided towards entering military universities



A system of field trips has also been deployed: camps, "university shifts," integration trips, during which children receive military training, participate in meetings with servicemen, visit museums of military glory, and undergo initial training. Thus, the military paradigm completely dominates the educational policy of the occupation regime.



In the occupied territories, participants of the "SVO" often attend classes on "Fundamentals of Security and Defense of the Homeland"

Creating conditions for the formation of a “soldier of the system” from an early age



Children and adolescents who are trained in military schools often become loyal to the occupying authorities.

The entire education system in the occupied territories is designed to form in children from an early age the mindset of a subordinate “soldier of the system”: disciplined, ready to obey orders, and ideologically motivated. Already in primary school, children join the “Eagles of Russia” movement [29], where from the first years, they are formed guidelines about loyalty to the “Motherland” (where the “Motherland” is the RF), the need to defend it with weapons in hand, as well as rejection of “enemies”—Ukraine and the West. In middle and senior school, this line continues to develop: children enter cadet classes, acquire the status of

“youth army members”, participate in militarized games, competitions and events. Games are actively used in schools—for example, staging trials of “Ukrainian Nazis”, where schoolchildren play the roles of accusers and traitors.

This forms attitudes based on punitive logic and the idea of an internal enemy. Thus, the educational process is being replaced by a program to form manageable, loyal, and mobilized citizens of the RF, ready to participate in military conflicts or support the Kremlin's aggressive policy.

Militarization of educational institutions as a physical and symbolic design of the system (form, rituals, narratives)

The militarization of schools and extracurricular institutions is carried out not only on a substantive level, but also on a symbolic level. All schools use a mandatory morning ceremony with the raising of the Russian flag and the singing of the anthem, as well as regular rituals dedicated to Russian military and memorable dates. Students in cadet classes wear military uniforms, often camouflage, with the symbols of the Russian Guard or the army. Schools hold ceremonial formations, "courage lessons", quizzes on weapons, demonstrations of drones, equipment exhibitions, and meetings with "heroes of the SMO". In a number of schools, there are people in military uniform on a permanent basis: both teachers and guests. All this visually designs the educational space as an army unit. The very structure of the school begins to resemble a military unit: with hierarchy, discipline, punishments and awards for "service".



Schools hold courage lessons, weapons quizzes, and meetings with SMO participants



Labor camps are organized on school bases, where children sew uniforms, weave camouflage nets, and collect parts for the front. Thus, even the appearance of the school becomes part of the ideological machine: the building, rituals, clothing, and leisure activities of the students are decorated in a military aesthetic.

In kindergartens and schools in the occupied territories, children are involved in ideological propaganda

Influence of russian special services on youth in the occupied territories

Since 2022, Russian security forces, including the FSB, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the Investigative Committee, have launched a large-scale campaign of ideological and military-patriotic indoctrination of children and adolescents in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. Their goal is not only to form loyalty to the regime, but also to prepare a personnel reserve for participation in combat operations and service in the Russian government structures.

2 месяца назад

ФСБ: В ЛНР задержали трёх подростков, готовивших теракты из мести

В Луганской Народной Республике сотрудники УФСБ пресекли деятельность трёх несовершеннолетних, которые, как выяснилось, входили в запрещённую экстремистскую организацию и разрабатывали планы террористических актов. Life.ru ✦

Anyone not loyal to the occupation authorities is accused of terrorism and extremism.



To strengthen ideological influence, the occupation authorities create cadet corps



Cadet corps are being created throughout the RF

1. Cadet Corps, Departmental Classes and Power Succession (Luhansk Oblast)

By 2021, 62 cadet classes and 2 cadet corps were operating in the occupied territory of Luhansk Oblast, where over 1,600 students studied [30]. These institutions train adolescents according to programs with a strong militarized and ideological component. Some graduates have already participated in hostilities. For example, Andriy Degtyarenko, a graduate of the Marshal Yefimov Cadet Corps in Luhansk, died in the summer of 2022 while participating in the SMO.

2. Cadet Corps of the Investigative Committee of the RF (Moscow, St. Petersburg, Volgograd)

In September 2022, a group of teenagers from Donetsk and Luhansk (43 children) were enrolled in the departmental cadet corps of the Investigative Committee of the RF. These are educational institutions focused on training future investigators, special services employees, and operatives. Education in such institutions is combined with rituals of country loyalty: regular flag-raising, singing of the anthem, ideological lectures, and a system of strict discipline.

3. The Warrior Center—the reproduction of the military-political elite

The “Warrior” Center [31], founded in 2023, is positioned as a structure for training the future military and political elite of the RF. It includes a network of camps, including in the occupied territories of Ukraine—a camp near Berdyansk is already operating, another is being built in Mariupol.

Up to 75% of instructors are veterans of the SMO with combat experience, which ensures a practical focus of training. From the 5th grade, students are involved in a hierarchical structure that recreates the principles of army subordination and ideological discipline.



Russia introduces hierarchical structure in military camps for students

4. Practical preparation for war—outside formal institutions

In the occupied territories, children are involved in field training, camps, and shooting training. Parents are presented with this as an opportunity for “social growth,” “patriotic education,” and “career guidance.” However, in reality, it is about developing skills that are directly applicable to combat operations. Discipline, survival skills, and tactical elements are actively cultivated, including the use of weapon models.

The program includes:

- › *fire and tactical training*
- › *political processing on the topic of “Russia’s mission” and “the fight against fascism”*
- › *training in clearing premises, camouflage, reconnaissance*
- › *psychological modeling of “extreme conditions”*
- › *role-playing reconstructions, including staged “trials” of “Ukrainian Nazis.”*



New methods of work of the FSB aimed at psychological operations against Ukraine

5. Psychological processing and the work of the FSB

The most disturbing element is the systemic psychological processing: the FSB oversees ideological sections in schools, monitors the work of “psychological services,” and participates in identifying teenagers “with signs of disloyalty.” Through parent meetings and “public patriotic clubs,” parents are convinced of the safety and prospects of their children’s participation in such programs. A number of schools are introducing mandatory reports on children’s participation in patriotic and paramilitary activities.

Cossack cadet corps as a tool for ideological integration and militarization of youth

The creation and operation of Cossack cadet classes and corps in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine is a systemic initiative of the Russian authorities [32] aimed at forming a loyal youth environment with a militarized and Orthodox-country identity. These institutions have become an important element of ideological and cultural influence, while simultaneously serving as a tool for training future generations of "warriors-statesmen."

In the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, a large-scale system of Cossack cadet corps and classes has been deployed, which performs the functions of ideological transformation of youth, militarization of consciousness and training of future loyal personnel for the Russian vertical. These institutions do not simply provide educational services, but also form a specific type of citizen—a "warrior-statesman" with a clear hierarchical, Orthodox and military identity. The founders and curators of Cossack cadet institutions are both federal bodies of the RF and paramilitary Cossack associations. The initiative comes from the Administration of the President of the RF and is implemented within the framework of the "Strategy



Cossack cadet corps train loyal and militarized youth.



Cossack Cadet Corps as a Tool for Ideological Integration and Militarization of Youth

of Country Policy towards the Russian Cossacks (2021-2030)" [33]. An interdepartmental working group has been created under the Council for Cossack Affairs to work in new regions, which includes representatives of the FAZN, the plenipotentiary representation in the Volga Federal District, the authorities of the so-called "DPR"/"LPR" and the All-Russian Cossack Society (ARCS).

Methodological and financial support is provided by the Ministry of Education of the RF. In the regions, there are local structures, such as the Ministry of Youth Policy in the occupied Kherson Oblast and working groups under local administrations, which ensure the integration of the Cossacks into the sphere of education and youth policy.

The role of Cossack organizations

Coordination and control over the network of institutions is carried out under the leadership of Ataman Vitaly Kuznetsov. In each Oblast of Ukraine, there are territorial military Cossack societies (TMCS): the Black Sea Army in Crimea, the Don Army in Donbas, the Zaporizhzhia Army in Zaporizhzhia, and the Tavria District in Kherson Oblast. These structures, together with the authorities, establish cadet classes, patronize the corps, participate in ceremonies, and pass on symbolic Cossack paraphernalia. An example is the Alchevsk Corps named after Platov, created with the participation of the head of "LPR" L. Pasichnyk and Country Duma deputy V. Vodolatsky.



Creation of Cossack cadet institutions in the "DPR" and "LPR"



Cossack cadet institutions were established

Already established institutions

Since 2022, active work has begun in the occupied areas of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts to create a network of Cossack cadet institutions. As of the end of 2023, there are 62 Cossack cadet classes and 2 full-fledged cadet corps operating in Luhansk Oblast. Some of the graduates of these structures have already participated in hostilities for the RF. A network of Cossack classes operates in the Donetsk Oblast, including the Alchevsk Cossack Corps. A "Ministry of Youth Policy" has been created in the Kherson Oblast, which coordinates the work of farm Cossack societies and participation in patriotic education. Cossack classes are being introduced in schools in Zaporizhzhia. Camps and Cossack gatherings are also held.

Participation of law enforcement agencies

The military direction in cadet education is handled by the Ministry of Defense of the RF, the Russian Guard, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and other structures. Institutions are often assigned to specific law enforcement agencies (the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Border Guard, the Ministry of Emergencies, etc.). Officers and veterans of combat operations teach military disciplines and act as mentors. A separate training program is implemented in the cadet corps of the Investigative Committee of the RF, where at least 43 children from Donbas are studying.

Religious component

Religious education is integrated into the daily lives of cadets. The corps has prayer rooms and chapels, priests conduct regular services, blessings, and participate in ceremonies. The ROC promotes the image of a "warrior of Christ," creating a fusion of Orthodoxy, patriotism, and military identity.

Daily life, rituals and symbolism

The cadets' daily routine is strictly regulated: exercise, formation, training, services, and prayers. The introduction of Cossack terminology, rituals, brotherhoods, oaths, the presentation of checkers and badges creates an atmosphere of sacralization of the service. Practical training (flanking, hand-to-hand combat, shooting) is a mandatory part of everyday life.



Cadet Cossack Corps of the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia Regions of the Temporarily Occupied Territory



Religious education in cadet corps.



Purpose and consequences

Cossack corps acts as a channel for broadcasting authoritarian ideology, destroying Ukrainian identity, implanting the image of the enemy, forming a loyal, controlled, militarized "new citizen." Through the integration of Cossack tradition, Orthodoxy, and service, young people are accustomed to war as the norm and to submission as a virtue.

Consequences of military policy in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine



The number of cadet corps in the occupied territory is increasing every year.

The Russian occupation administration is actively introducing elements of military and patriotic training into the education system in the temporarily occupied territories (TOT) of Ukraine. According to the Almenda Center, 6,265 children are currently studying military science in schools in occupied Crimea alone [34]. This number has increased over the year due to the opening of new cadet classes: there are currently 260 cadet classes (specialized military classes) operating in Crimean schools, 63 more than a year earlier. In addition, 16 Cossack classes with a bias towards Cossack ideology have been opened on the peninsula. In other occupied Oblasts, the process is similar: for example, 9 cadet classes have been created in the occupied part of Kherson Oblast, 13 in Zaporizhzhia Oblast, and 86 in Luhansk Oblast (data for Donetsk Oblast are unavailable). It is important to understand that in

addition to special cadet classes, the entire education system in the TOT is permeated with elements of military training and propaganda.



6,265 children are studying military science in schools in occupied Crimea

From September 1, 2023, a mandatory subject "Fundamentals of Security and Defense of the Motherland" has been introduced in schools in Russia and the territories it occupies, replacing the OBZH course. In fact, this is a renewed initial military training: schoolchildren in grades 2-11 are taught to handle firearms, throw training grenades, operate drones, provide first aid on the battlefield, and march in formation.

Also, weekly ideological classes ("Conversations about important") are held with the younger classes, which instill militaristic and chauvinistic values. Thus, the vast majority of school-age children in the occupied territories undergo one or another form of military or paramilitary training, whether practical training or ideological "education". Separately, the occupiers involve young people in extracurricular military-patriotic movements. In particular, the number of children participating in the Russian movement "Youth Army" has rapidly increased.

If in 2017, the "Youth Army" included about 1,500 children in the occupied Crimea, and then by November 2024, there were more than 15,000 of them. A similar trend is observed in other Oblasts of Ukraine: for example, in the occupied part of the Kherson Oblast, according to "Almenda", the number of "Youth Army" children increased from 200,000 to 600,000 per year. In addition to "Youth Army", there is a network of military education clubs ("Young Guard", "Amazons", VPK "Warrior", etc.), which accept children from the age of 7. Every year, more than million children go through the system of cadet-patriotic education (including Cossack circles)—in total in the RF and in the occupied territories. In addition, the occupation authorities organize militarized camps: according to Almenda, in the summer of 2023 alone, more than 80,000 Ukrainian children from the TOT were taken to camps in Crimea and the RF, where they were subjected to intensive militarization under the guise of "patriotic education." All these facts indicate a large-scale campaign aimed at forming loyalty to the RF in children and preparing them for future military service.



Thousands of children are involved in the Youth Army and the Young Guard



Military camps, 80 thousand Ukrainian children taken to Crimea



Luhansk region, Alchevsk, first Cossack corps



Special course "History and culture of the Cossacks of Luhansk Oblast"

Cossack cadet corps in the occupied territories.

The occupiers pay special attention to the revival of Cossack traditions in the military education of young people. Several Cossack cadet corps (boarding schools with a military, "Cossack" ideology) are already operating in the captured part of the Luhansk Oblast. Cossack Cadet Corps named after Air Marshal Oleksandr Yefimov [35] was created on the basis of the former Ukrainian military lyceum. This is the first cadet corps opened by the occupation administration back in 2014. Currently, more than 200 teenagers are studying in the Luhansk Cossack Corps as "defenders of the LPR". In Alchevsk (Luhansk Oblast), Alchevsk Cossack Cadet Corps named after General Matvey Platov was created. It was opened in 2018, becoming the second Cossack corps in the Luhansk Oblast. In Starobilsk (Luhansk Oblast), the Starobilsk Cossack Cadet Corps named after General Vasyl Margelov was opened after the full-scale invasion, on September 1, 2023.

The first batch included 60 students, and it is planned to expand to 500 cadets, including those from neighboring raions of Luhansk Oblast. Thus, there is no less than three Cossack cadet corps operating in the occupied territory of Luhansk Oblast (in Luhansk, Alchevsk, and Starobilsk). All of them pay special attention to military training and instilling in students the so-called "traditional values" of the Don Cossacks. A special course "History and Culture of the Cossacks of Luhansk Oblast" has even been introduced for schoolchildren in Luhansk Oblast for grades 5-11. No separate Cossack corps has yet been recorded in the occupied districts of Donetsk Oblast, as the emphasis there is on "regular" cadet institutions (see below). There is also no information about the opening of Cossack corps in the recently occupied parts of the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts—Cossack education is being introduced there mainly through cadet classes in schools.

Regular (non-Cossack) cadet corps.

In addition to the Cossack cadet institutions, general-type cadet corps have also been established in the occupied territories, focused on training personnel for various Russian security forces. In Donetsk, the O. Zakharchenko Cadet Corps [36] operates on the basis of secondary school No. 4 in Donetsk. It is named after the liquidated first “Head of the DPR” Aleksandr Zakharchenko. Even very young students are recruited to this corps—from the age of 8, they take the oath and wear a cadet uniform. The training program includes combat training, classes with military personnel, and ideological work aimed at instilling hatred of Ukraine. Sevastopol (occupied Crimea): the Presidential Cadet School of the Ministry of Defense of the RF and the Cadet Corps of the Investigative Committee of the RF operate. Both educational institutions were opened shortly after the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and operate as full-board cadet boarding schools. The Presidential Cadet School in Sevastopol was established by order of the Minister of Defense of the RF Sergei Shoigu in 2014 as one of the “elite” institutions for training teenagers for service in the army. The Cadet Corps of the Investigative Committee (IC) prepares students for subsequent admission to higher education institutions of the IC system and other law enforcement agencies. In addition, dozens of cadet classes have been formed in Sevastopol



Presidential Cadet School in Sevastopol

schools for various law enforcement agencies (the Ministry of Emergency Situations, the Russian Guard, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, etc.). As of 2023, more than 480 students have already taken the oath of cadet of the Ministry of Emergency Situations (for the period since 2016) in one school No. 60 in Sevastopol alone. In Mariupol (occupied part of Donetsk Oblast), it is planned to open a branch of the Nakhimov Naval School, a cadet institution of the Russian Navy.



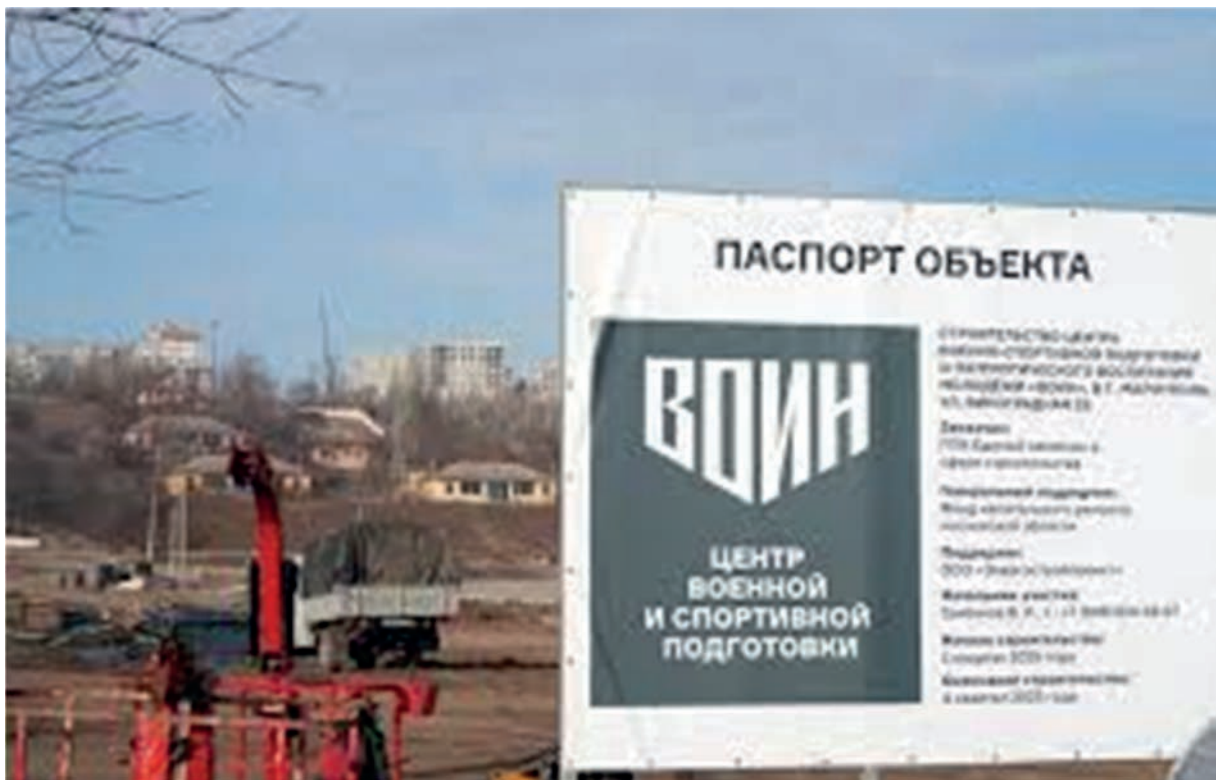
Donetsk, Cadet Corps named after O. Zakharchenko

The occupiers have announced the recruitment of up to 560 students to this naval cadet corps in Mariupol from September 1, 2024 [37]. It is assumed that teenagers will be trained there for service in the fleet, using the base of the captured Azov Country University. Kherson and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts: no separate stationary cadet corps have been created yet. In these regions, the occupation authorities emphasize the introduction of cadet and military-patriotic classes in existing schools, as well

as sending children to training camps and summer camps for military-patriotic education. Plans to open cadet schools in the future are also being voiced—for example, it was reported that the possibility of creating corps in large cities such as Melitopol or Berdyansk is being considered. Currently, all "patriotic education" in these territories is implemented through a system of educational circles, NPE lessons, and Cossack classes in regular schools.



Thus, several specialized cadet educational institutions operate in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine: at least three Cossack cadet corps (in Luhansk, Alchevsk, and Starobilsk) and several "regular" cadet corps and schools (in Donetsk, two in Sevastopol, and planned in Mariupol). Thousands of children have passed through these institutions together. Other hundreds of thousands of children are involved in militarization through school programs and youth organizations. All the above figures and facts demonstrate Russia's purposeful policy of military education of children in the occupied territories—from primary school to universities, which, according to human rights activists, is part of the strategy of preparing new generations for further service in the Russian army and, at the same time, a gross violation of the rights of children in the occupied lands.



Selection for the Naval Cadet Corps in Mariupol.

Based on confirmed data on cadet institutions, the "Youth Army", schools with a military orientation, and camps, the total number of children who have undergone military training in some form in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine is at least **600,000-650,000 people**.



Three Cossack cadet corps (in Luhansk, Alchevsk, Starobilsk)

Approximate calculation:

- › About 6,265 children in cadet and Cossack classes in occupied Crimea
- › Over 15,000 participants of the "Youth Army" in Crimea
- › 86 cadet classes in Luhansk Oblast + at least 3 Cossack cadet corps (Luhansk, Alchevsk, and Starobilsk)
- › 9–13 cadet classes in Kherson and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts
- › 1 large cadet corps in Donetsk (named after Zakharchenko) + a planned branch of the Nakhimov School in Mariupol
- › 80,000 children who passed through paramilitary camps in the summer of 2023
- › Over 500,000 children are systematically covered through the subjects "Fundamentals of Security and Defense of the Homeland", "Conversations about Important", training of the Ministry of Emergencies, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Military-Commissioned Forces, and participation in mass patriotic events.
Number of Cossack cadet corps is at least 3 (in Luhansk, Alchevsk, and Starobilsk).
Number of regular (non-Cossack) cadet corps is at least 4 (in Donetsk and Sevastopol; two corps are planned in Mariupol).

Activities of the “Voin” center in the territories of Ukraine occupied by the RF

Republic of Crimea.

In 2024, the Russian authorities announced plans to open a branch of the Voin center in Crimea on behalf of the President of the RF [38]. In late August 2024, a meeting was held with the participation of local officials (Minister of Internal Policy of the Republic of Crimea Albert Kurshutov) on the creation of a Crimean branch, the task of which is to prepare young people for military service and educate "a new generation of patriots and defenders of Russia." By the end of 2024, a plan for the creation and operation of the center was developed. It is assumed that in Crimea, the Voin center will be fully integrated into the system of military-patriotic education of youth, although the exact location of the branch has not yet been disclosed. A Voin branch is also expected to open in Sevastopol as part of the all-Russian coverage of the program, given the city's status as a federal subject.



Branch of the center "Voin" in Zaporizhzhia region



Russia plans to open a branch of the "Warrior" center in Crimea

Zaporizhzhia Oblast.

In the occupied part of Zaporizhzhia Oblast, a branch of the “Voin” group also began to form in 2024 [43]. According to the project’s curators, a new military camp “Voin” was established in the Oblast near Berdyansk, which was already operational in 2024. Petro Andryushchenko ("Center for the Study of Occupation") reports that the Berdyansk camp is designed for approximately 1,000 children per year and has begun accepting the first cadets. Officially, Russian sources announced the launch of the centers in Zaporizhzhia Oblast for 2025, but, de facto, military training programs were already being conducted for Zaporizhzhia adolescents in 2024. In particular, a group of 44 adolescents from the Zaporizhzhia Oblast participated in the Volgograd summer shift “Time of Young Heroes” as part of the “Voin” center. It is expected that the stationary center "Voin" in Zaporizhzhia Oblast will develop around Berdyansk or Melitopol, where the Russian administration has control. Taking into account the construction of camps in neighboring regions (Mariupol and Khorly), it can be assumed that the Zaporizhzhia branch will also receive its own base. According to Russian representatives, the opening of full-fledged "Voin" centers in Zaporizhzhia is planned during 2025.



Kherson branch of the center "Voin"

Kherson Oblast [42]:

In the occupied part of the Kherson Oblast, the "Voin" branch was established in the spring of 2024. According to the local "Ministry of Defense, Youth, and Sports", the center was officially opened in April 2024, having previously recruited the first batch of about 300 teenagers aged 14-17. The center's base was located in the resort village of Khorly, Skadovsk raion, on the Black Sea coast. This camp combines a stationary training building with a summer tent camp: field shifts for local cadets were planned for the summer of 2024. In the future, on the instructions of Serhiy Kiriienko, a place is being sought in the Kherson Oblast for the construction of a permanent large "Voin" camp next to the "Tavrida" cluster (possibly in the Dzharylhach area or another part of the coast). In the spring of 2024, Kiriienko himself came to the Oblast to inspect the work on launching the center. The "Voin" center in the Kherson Oblast closely cooperates with local occupation structures. According to the KP newspaper, regional ministries of youth and education, as well as movements, such as the All-Russian Student Corps of Rescuers, were involved in the organizational process. In the summer of 2024, Kherson cadets of the "Voin" also traveled to Russia for training: for example, 59 teenagers from the Kherson Oblast were sent to the Volgograd Oblast for intensive training during the July shift.

Donetsk Oblast (so-called "DPR").

The Donetsk branch of the Voin center was one of the first; already in May 2023, Voin began operating on the territory of the DPR. In 2024, the center expanded its activities: in the summer, a group of ~140 teenagers from the DPR was sent to an interregional military training camp in the Volgograd Oblast (the Avangard camp), where they underwent three-week training together with young people from the RF [39]. By the beginning of 2025, stationary training programs were operating in the Donetsk Oblast, and the center itself had plans for infrastructure development. In Mariupol (the largest occupied city in the Oblast) the occupation authorities are building a major Voin training camp on the site of the former Orlyatko children's camp. This Mariupol center will become the fourth Voin branch in the occupied territories of Ukraine. Its profile is full-fledged military training of children and adolescents: shooting, parachuting, mine-explosive operations, medicine, and drone control. The construction is documented (a facility passport with the "Voin" logo was found at the construction site). The opening of the Mariupol camp is scheduled for the fourth quarter of 2025. Thus, one "Voin" branch is already operating in the Donetsk Oblast (probably based in Donetsk or another city), and by the end of 2025, a large camp in Mariupol will be added [40].



Donetsk branch of the center "Voin"

Luhansk Oblast (so-called "LPR").

The Luhansk branch of the Voin center began operating in 2024. It was officially opened in Luhansk and soon began training both schoolchildren and students from local universities. According to the Head of the "LPR", Leonid Pasichnyk, who visited the center together with the curator, Serhiy Kiriienko, during the first months of operation (until the fall of 2024), more than 500 schoolchildren and students successfully completed the courses in Luhansk, and more than 300 more continued their studies at that time. Classes are held on the basis of educational institutions [41]. The center has concluded agreements with all

universities of the "LPR", thanks to which students can enroll in the Voin cadets and receive military training in parallel with their studies. The infrastructure of the center in Luhansk includes classrooms and practical training areas, and the "LPR's" authorities, together with representatives of the Russian presidential administration, are discussing the expansion of the material base (including the creation of a training ground for drone piloting). The Luhansk branch is headed by Ivan Kharlanov—his candidacy was approved by the Voin supervisory board; in December 2024, he met with V. Vodolatsky (Chairman of the board) to plan patriotic events for the year ahead.



Luhansk branch of the center "Voin"

Curriculums and forms of training



Rospatriot Center is a division of the federal agency "Rosmolod"

Main areas of training. The Voin centers are a network of military sports camps for teenagers, where intensive pre-university military training is implemented. The programs are designed for young people aged 14-18 (high school students), as well as

students and reservists up to 35 years old for extended training. Training lasts from several weeks to several months, depending on the program. Cadets are taught 8 key military-applied disciplines, including:

- **Firearms training:** handling small arms, shooting practice at a shooting range and at a training ground. Teenagers are taught to disassemble and assemble a machine gun, to shoot accurately from various types of small arms. For example, a camp near Mariupol has announced classes in shooting with combat weapons under the guidance of instructors.
- **Tactical and formation training:** Basic combat tactics, unit movement, camouflage, and military discipline and drills. Although open sources mention drills less, it is clear that drills and discipline are part of the course to teach teenagers to obey commands and operate in formation. Instructors—most often combat veterans—instill teamwork skills and the ability to obey orders.
- **Engineering training (mine and explosives):** handling mines and explosive devices, basics of sapper work, demining. The Mariupol center plans to teach mining and demining of territories. The program will probably include the basics of engineering reconnaissance, setting up signal lines, and detecting mines, which is already being practiced at training camps.

- **Communication and radio operations:** cadets master the operation of military communications equipment, radio stations, the basics of encryption, and information exchange in the field.
- **Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) Control:** One of the top priority courses. Young people learn to pilot drones both on simulators and computers, and practically in the gym or outdoors, by launching quadcopters. Given the active use of drones on the modern front, teenagers are taught the skills of aerial photography, adjusting drone fire, and countering enemy UAVs. In Luhansk, the leadership even initiated the creation of a separate training ground for practicing drone control in real flight conditions.
- **Tactical medicine:** battlefield first aid, basic medical knowledge for soldiers. Classes teach how to stop bleeding, apply tourniquets and bandages, and evacuate the wounded.
- **Physical and drill training:** strengthening physical fitness (daily sports, hand-to-hand combat, overcoming obstacles). Although not emphasized separately, cadets go through drills, learn to march and follow commands as part of the discipline of education. Character hardening is also carried out through field trips, marching, night shifts, and other elements of army life.
- **National Security and Fundamentals of Defense of the Motherland:** this block is more of a theoretical and ideological nature. According to the programs, teenagers are taught the basics of the national security of the RF, while actually laying down an idea of the surrounding threats and the role of Russia. For example, the Kherson center promised to teach "the basics of the national security of the RF" on a par with purely military disciplines.

Training camps and grounds

Classes are conducted both in stationary formats (evening and weekend training at schools and sections) and in the form of field training. Intensive camp shifts are organized in the summer: for example, in 2024, teenagers from the occupied Oblasts of Ukraine underwent training in three-week summer camps in the Volgograd Oblast. There, in field conditions, they practiced the acquired skills under the supervision of experienced instructors. At such trainings, the emphasis is on practice: shooting, tactical training, camp life with overnight stays in tents, and fulfillment of standards. Military sports games are also organized, for example, an updated version of the all-Russian game "Zarnitsa 2.0", in which cadets from different regions compete in militarized relay races.



Patriotic events are an integral part of the ideological education of youth

Extracurricular educational activities

In addition to military training itself, the "Voin" center conducts extensive educational work. Patriotic activities are an integral part of the program. Cadets participate in rallies, flower-laying

ceremonies, and meet with veterans and participants in the current "special military operation" in Ukraine.

In January 2025, for example, in Mariupol, "Voin" organized a meeting of schoolchildren with so-called "volunteers" (apparently, war veterans) so that they could share their "heroic experience." The center also conducts history lessons (especially, Russian military history) and courage lessons. For

example, 2025 has been declared the "Year of the Defender of the Motherland" in the RF, and "Voin" branches are preparing a special series of lessons on the history of the "Great Patriotic War" for the 80th anniversary of the victory [44].

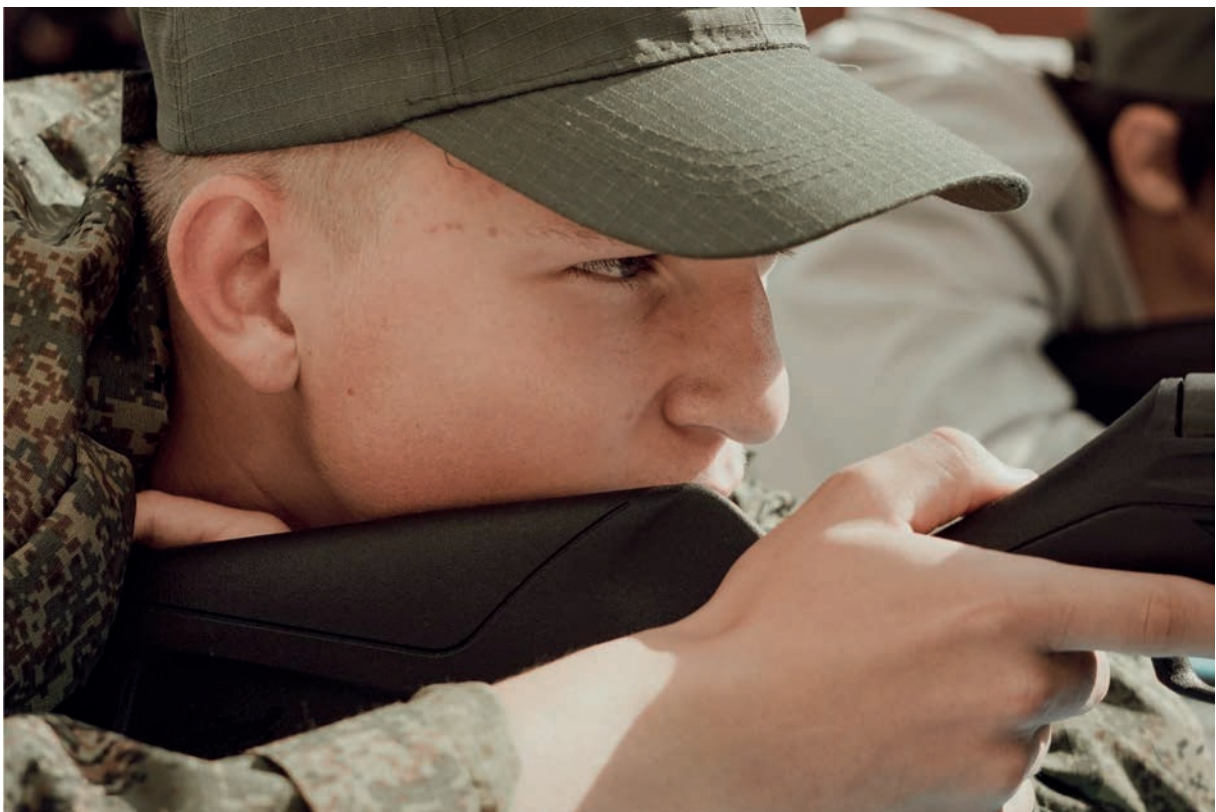
Integration with the educational system

The classes of the "Voin" center are officially positioned as additional education and patriotic circles at schools. In occupied regions, they are

often held on the basis of schools after school hours. Some programs are planned to be introduced into the school curriculum.



Thus, in March 2024, the Voin center announced a pilot project for initial military training for 5th grade students (i.e. children of ~10-11 years old). This indicates a desire to reach the younger contingent and integrate the NVP course directly into the school schedule. The "LPR" has already introduced a school subject "Fundamentals of Security and Defense of the Motherland", whose teachers are undergoing retraining at the Voin center—in fact, it is an analogue of the Soviet NVP, modernized and ideologically saturated to Russian standards.



Classes at the "Warrior" center are officially positioned as additional education and patriotic clubs at schools.

Number of children involved and the scale

The militarization programs of the Voin center are rapidly gaining momentum in the occupied territories [45]. According to official data from the Russian Ministry of Education, by the beginning of 2025, more than 1,100 teenagers in the newly occupied regions ("DPR", "LPR", Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson Oblasts) had already become cadets of Voin branches. This figure reflects those who began training directly on the ground in regional branches.

In total, across Russia, including the occupied territories, by the beginning of 2025, more than 15,000 young people had started classes at the Voin center, and the plan for the year is at least 35,000 trained cadets. Thus, the share of the "new Oblasts of the RF" in the overall planned indicators is noticeable and will grow with the development of local infrastructure.

The distribution by Oblasts is as follows:

Luhansk Oblast: As mentioned, by November 2024, 500+ people had passed through the Luhansk center, with ~300 more in the process of training. This number will probably exceed 800–1,000 by spring 2025, taking into account new recruitments.

Donetsk Oblast: No exact official figures were published, but we can focus on similar scales. If Luhansk provided ~800 students in six months, then Donetsk (with a larger population) could attract a comparable or larger number. The figures are indirectly visible from field trips: for example, 140 Donetsk teenagers went to Volgograd for just one summer shift. It can be assumed that in total, in the summer of 2024, at least several hundred young residents of the Donetsk Oblast went through the program (some locally, some at training camps). Ukrainian sources report that more than 2.5 thousand teenagers from Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson Oblasts underwent training in the summer of 2024 at the Avangard camp in the Volgograd Oblast. This figure (~2.5k) reflects the total export of children to study in the RF and emphasizes the scale: we are talking about thousands of people involved in one season.

Kherson and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts: Their figures in 2024 are somewhat lower due to the later start of the centers. The first recruitment in Kherson Oblast is 300 people; in Zaporizhzhia, it is probably similar. But intensive trips to training camps (59 Kherson and 44 Zaporizhzhia teenagers in just one shift) mean that hundreds of young men from these regions have already been covered by training. In the future (2025), it is planned to increase the recruitment: in the summer of 2024 alone, in Kherson Oblast, it was expected to send 200 teenagers per shift to camps in other regions, in addition to the local camp.

In addition, there are signs that the Voin center is focused not only on mass appeal, but also on creating elite groups. In particular, the interview mentions that Voin is betting on training the future military-political elite among Ukrainian teenagers. That is, the most motivated and capable cadets are selected, who may then be given the opportunity to

enter military universities in the RF. Advanced programs, internships, and competitions (such as the aforementioned military sports game) are provided for them. Thus, in addition to quantitative growth (thousands of participants), there is a qualitative selection for further integration into the security forces.

Relationship with the Russian army, Rosgvardia and other structures

Curators and founders.

The Voin Center is a country project created by direct order of President Putin in 2022 [46]. Its initiators and ideologists are high-ranking officials: Sergey Kiriyenko (the First Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration of the RF) and Yuri Trutnev (Vice Prime Minister, Plenipotentiary Representative in the Far East). These individuals head the Russian Martial Arts Union and are engaged in youth policy, which provided the

organizational basis for Voin. Kiriyenko personally checks the implementation of the center in the occupied Oblasts of Ukraine—he visited Luhansk and Kherson, supervising the work of the branches. Maria Lvova-Belova (the Russian Commissioner for Children's Rights) also performs curatorial functions—according to the Ukrainian side, she is responsible for organizing the recreation and education of Ukrainian children taken to the RF, where their further ideological training takes place.



The Voin Center is funded from the Russian state budget through Rosmolod and from federal programs for "patriotic education."

Structural subordination.

Formally, "Voin" is registered as an autonomous non-profit organization (ANO "Center for the Development of Military-Sports Training and Patriotic Education of Youth") [47] under the jurisdiction of Rospatriot Center. Rospatriot Center is a division of the federal agency "Rosmolodiozh", subordinate to the government. Thus, funding comes from the country budget of the RF through Rosmolodiozh and from federal programs of "patriotic education". The founders of "Voin" are considered to be, in addition to Rosmolodiozh, the Russian Union of Martial Arts. In the occupied Oblasts of Ukraine, the activities of the centers are

also ensured by local "ministers" of education and youth policy, who are actually integrated into the system of the Ministry of Education of the RF—it is noteworthy that the first director of "Voin" in 2023 was Admiral Sergey Avakants (former commander of the Pacific Fleet), and in 2024, he was replaced in the position by Dmitry Shevchenko—the former Deputy minister of education of the "LPR", who was actively involved in the integration of Luhansk schools into the Russian system. Such a choice of the head emphasizes the close connection of the project with the Ministry of Education and, at the same time, with people who worked in the occupied territories.

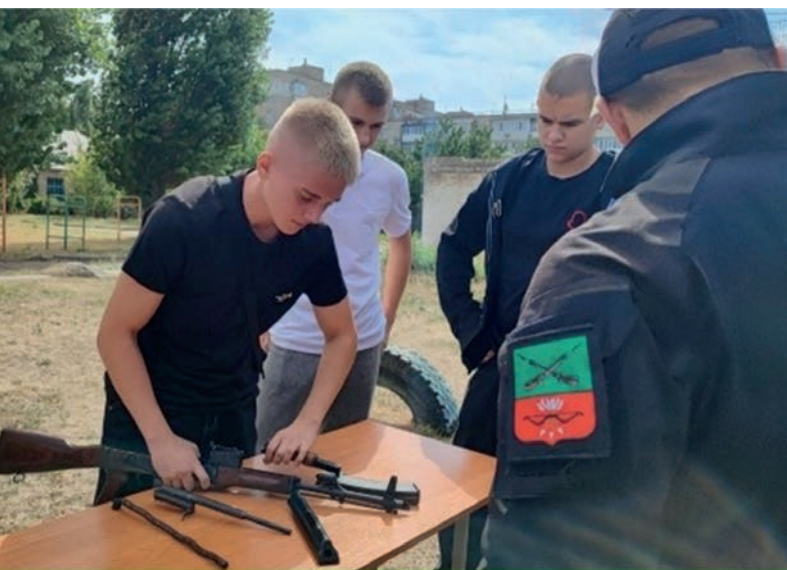
Instructors and connection with the army.

Teenagers are trained by professional instructors, recruited mainly from among former servicemen. According to the Co-Chairman of the board of "Voin" Viktor Vodolatsky, 75% of the center's instructors are participants in the so-called "SMO" (war against Ukraine). These are people with combat experience; many are recent front-line soldiers, in particular, from units of the Russian army, the Russian Guard, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. For example, among the requirements for instructors of the Kherson branch were listed: service in the Russian Armed Forces or other law enforcement agencies, sports ranks in shooting or applied sports, pedagogical experience. That is, veterans of the army, special forces, and possibly the Russian Guard are welcome (the Russian Guard is not mentioned directly in open sources, but "other law enforcement agencies" mean both the internal troops and the police). Apparently, the role of instructors is also played by fighters of paramilitary formations controlled by Moscow, such as Cossack battalions. Vodolatsky himself (a Cossack general of the so-called "LPR") is engaged in the recruitment of instructors.

Ministry of Defense of the RF. Despite the civilian shell (ANO, Rosmolodiozh), the center "Voin" de facto complements the system of the Ministry of Defense. It can be considered as a parallel project to the Ministry of Defense's movement "Yunarmiya"



Training of instructors for new branches based on the Tyumen regional center "Voin"



In the future, graduates of the "Warrior" course are considered by the Ministry of Defense as a trained reserve.

and the training centers of the Scientific and Technological Enterprise "Avangard". However, "Voin" has a more rigid military orientation and structure.

The Ministry of Defense is directly involved in methodological support: for example, the training of instructors for new branches was held at the Tyumen Regional Center "Voin" with the participation of military specialists [48]. The Ministry of Defense also allocates training grounds and camps (such as the Volgograd Training Center of the Avangard Military Unit) for summer training, where the program is implemented jointly with army units. It can be noted that photos from classes are often published with the logos of the Russian Ministry of Defense, which indicates the constant presence of army supervisors.

In the future, graduates of the "Voin" course are considered by the Ministry of Defense as a trained reserve: for example, the provision of benefits when entering military schools or enrolling in the mobilization reserve is being discussed.

Ministry of Education of the RF.

Ministry of Education plays a key role in the institutionalization of the Voin Center [49]. First, the Ministry of Education itself gives the "go" to integrate the "Warrior" programs into schools as clubs or electives, and also retrain OBZH teachers on the basis of the centers. Secondly, the center's statistics are regularly announced through the Ministry of Education (For example, the portal "Russian Education" published data on 1.1 thousand cadets in new Oblasts). Finally, the figure of Dmitry Shevchenko, who previously worked in education in the "LPR" and became the director of "Voin", indicates coordination with the Ministry of Education at the highest level. Simply put, "Voin" is a joint brainchild of the presidential administration, the Ministry of Defense, and the Ministry of Education., which involved the resources of all these departments.



75% of the Voin center instructors are participants of the so-called "SMO"



Other organizations. Other pro-Kremlin structures also participate in the implementation of the programs: the Russian Movement of Children and Youth (Movement of the First), the Youth Army, and veterans' public organizations. Although the Voin is positioned separately from the Youth Army, they interact on the ground—most often the same children are also in the Youth Army [50] and attend the Voin's meetings. Cooperation with the Ministry of Emergencies (in the form of a student corps of rescuers) to teach the basics of rescue work is also mentioned. The Russian Guard does not appear directly in the sources about the Voin center, but is indirectly present. For example, in Kherson, the Russian Guard participated in the restoration of the monument and other patriotic actions related to the center's activities. It is not excluded that instructors with experience of service in the Russian Guard are included in the staff. Thus, "Voin" is an interagency project that consolidates the efforts of the army, the education system, youth movements, and law enforcement agencies for a single goal.

Ideological education and the Orthodox component

Ideology and "traditional values".

The "Voin" Center presents its mission not only as military training, but also as patriotic education based on "traditional values." This is manifested in the constant ideological support of training. Teenagers are instilled with ideas about defending the Motherland, the continuity of victories (special emphasis is on the so-called "Great Patriotic War"), and loyalty to duty. The curators' welcoming speeches include slogans about "courage, honor,

.and the connection of generations." In practice, this means that in addition to shooting techniques, children are taught the "correct" values: to respect elders, to be disciplined, and to be ready to sacrifice themselves for the country at any time. The center pays attention to the study of "history" in a pro-Kremlin interpretation. For example, cadets study the "history of victories" of Russian weapons and the "exploits" of heroes. This lays down loyalty to the Russian country.



Particularly harsh ideological training is carried out in the occupied territories, where the goal is to break the Ukrainian identity of children. According to experts, the Kremlin sees these centers as a tool of "re-education": teenagers are taught to hate Ukraine and see Russia as their new homeland. In fact, "they are turned into ideological soldiers," emphasizes Petro Andryushchenko. After several years of constant indoctrination through lessons, clubs, and camps, teenagers turn into completely loyal cadets ready to follow orders. In confirmation, he cites a case: a young Donetsk man, having spent four years in the Youth Army, immediately after turning 18 voluntarily joined the Russian army and died two weeks later. This is an indicative result: the goal of the system is to raise a generation that will go to fight for the interests of the RF without hesitation.

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Methods of ideological work.

A great emphasis is placed on extracurricular activities and clubs. Andryushchenko notes that in the occupied territories, schoolchildren spend almost twice as much time at school as usual—after the main lessons, they are kept for mandatory clubs and sections of "patriotic organizations". Students are practically forced to join either the "Youth Army" or "Voin" (both projects complement each other). Thus, outside of school, children are constantly involved in patriotic games, competitions, and watching propaganda films (as part of the "Voin.Kino" project, where the partner is the Russian Television a.k.a. RT), meetings with pro-Kremlin bloggers, etc. All this forms a closed information space where narratives about the "new fascism in Ukraine" and the "heroic mission" of Russia are broadcast. For example, the slogan of one of the changes is "We are fighting against the new fascism", which openly programs children to see the enemy in Ukraine.

Orthodox component.

The official programs of "Voin" declare a secular character, focusing on the army and patriotism. No direct mandatory religious education has been announced. However, the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) traditionally supports militaristic education, and its influence can be traced indirectly [51]. Sergei Kiriyenko's speech refers to education based on "traditional values," and this term in the RF refers to both Orthodox culture and conservative morality. In some regions, for example, in the Murmansk branch of "Voin", among the events mentioned were the consecration of flags or the presence of a priest at the ceremony (by analogy with army

traditions)—although such facts are not advertised specifically for the occupied territories. However, it is known that in Sevastopol itself (not directly within the framework of "Voin", but in parallel), there is the "Spiritual and Patriotic Center named after St. warrior Feodor Ushakov" [52], where the ROC participates in the education of young people. It is likely that as the stationary "Voin" camps are deployed in the Donbas and southern Ukraine, elements typical of the RF will be practiced there: blessing of participants by a priest before sending them to the military drills, prayer services for victory, and military song competitions with Orthodox motifs.



Education is based on religious values.



Thus, there is no direct religious course, but Orthodoxy is woven into the common ideological fabric as part of the "spiritual staples". If a child is already involved in church activity (for example, in military-patriotic clubs at churches), this is only welcome. In general, the focus is on secular militarism, which relies on religion only as a cultural background.

Management and financing in the occupied territories



The occupied administrations are actively developing a children's militaristic structure in order to create a loyal layer of youth.

Joint management of the center.

The Voin Center has a single management vertical with its headquarters in Moscow. The Supervisory Board is headed by Country Duma Deputy Viktor Vodolatsky, a Cossack chieftain and Hero of the "LPR". He is responsible for all branches, often personally introducing new leaders and presenting flags at the opening of branches. Until the spring of 2024, Admiral Serhiy Avakyants was the director of Voin, but in August 2024, he was replaced by Dmitry Shevchenko. Shevchenko is a person associated specifically with the occupied territories (he worked in the "government" of the "LPR"), so his appointment can be seen as an attempt to increase attention to new Oblasts. The structure also includes the Deputy Chairman of the board Andranik Gasparyan, who voices statistics and training plans (for example, he reported in the media about 1,100 cadets in "historical regions"). Gasparyan is probably involved in the operational activities of the branches.

Local leaders.

Each Oblast has its own branch director. In the Donetsk branch, Oleksandr Kamyshov became the director—he is mentioned as a participant in the ceremony in Tyumen, who received the flag of the "DPR's" branch. In Luhansk, the branch is headed by Ivan Kharlanov (Vodolatsky's meeting with him was reported in February 2025). In the Kherson Oblast, one of the local pro-Russian activists or officers was probably appointed as the head (his full name was not found in open sources, but it is known that the organization was handled by the "governor" Volodymyr Saldo, personally appointed by Moscow, so management may be through his office). In Zaporizhzhia, the youth curator is Yevhen Balytsky (the Head of the occupation administration), so it is possible that the director of "Voin" is subordinate to his structures. In general, funding and personnel in the "new Oblasts" are largely tied to local administrations, but under the control of the Moscow center.

Project financing.

The Voin Center is financed from the federal budget of the RF and priority funds. In 2023-2024, funding was provided through the Patriotic Education of Citizens of the RF program and through the Presidential Grants Fund (to a lesser extent). The maintenance of each regional branch is provided jointly: part of the costs is borne by the federal center (instructor salaries, equipment), part by the Oblast. Thus, the construction of capital camps (for example, Mariupol) is financed from the federal budget: the customer is the specialized country company "Single Customer in the Construction Sector" under the leadership of the Deputy Prime

Minister Marat Khusnullin. This means direct budget financing of the infrastructure. Each year, significant amounts are allocated to the Voin network in view of plans to cover the entire country. For example, in 2025, the opening of 31 more representative offices based on universities and children's centers has been announced—accordingly, the budget is expanding. On the ground, the occupying "governments" are also redirecting resources. Private sponsorship is possible: large country corporations and oligarchs often support patriotic projects. However, the main source remains the treasury of the RF.



Russian officials openly declare that the task is to open a "Voin" in every region of the RF, including the recently "reunited" territories. Thus, funding is guaranteed by the country in the long term as part of the strategy for integrating these Oblasts.



The "Warrior" Center is one of the main projects for the ideological re-education of youth

Ideological goals and integration of children into force structures



Formation of loyalty and suppression of Ukrainian identity. The main hidden goal of the "Voin" center's activities in the occupied lands is to reshape the consciousness of young people, make them loyal citizens of the RF, and deprive them of a sense of Ukrainian identity. Through militarization, the "friend-alien" effect is achieved: children are taught to see the enemy in Ukraine and the West, and Russia as a defender



The integration of children and youth into the Russian Federation's security forces is taking place with the help of militaristic projects such as "Warrior", "Youth Army", and others.

In essence, this is a total militarized indoctrination of the younger generation in the occupied territories. School programs are being rewritten (history and literature with a Russian imperial bias), and extracurricular activities are filled with military propaganda. This approach is designed to displace everything Ukrainian in children's self-identification in a few years and replace it with the "Russian world." The "Voin" centers are the vanguard of this process, because the combination of drill and ideological education most effectively "reformats" teenagers.

Social lift and involvement in law enforcement agencies.

For many teenagers, participation in "patriotic camps" is presented as a "chance in life." Propaganda instills in parents that this is a kind of "social elevator": a disciplined cadet child will be able to enter a good military university, have a career in the army or police. Especially in depressed front-line areas, where there are few other prospects, service in the RF's law enforcement agencies looks like an attractive way out.

Thus, the “Voin” center is integrated into the recruitment system: from a school club to a specialized camp, then to a military school or immediately on a contract. The difference between “Voin” and the more massive “Youth Army” is that “Voin” focuses on the more motivated and capable—the “elite,” who will then fill the officer corps or administration. However, even ordinary participants, without becoming the elite, at least turn into trained soldiers to replenish the troops.

Integration into Russian security structures.

There are already cases where graduates of these programs join the ranks of armed formations. In the occupied “republics”, conscription and mobilization are established from the age of 18, and psychologically the guys from “Voin” are more ready for this than others. Propaganda of heroism and romanticization of military service push to choose the profession of a military or security officer. Russian security structures actually receive “ready-made” recruits: a person knows how to shoot, fly a drone, knows tactics. There is no need for long courses of NVP—they have already been completed. So, in the units that are being formed in new territories (for example, the 1st Army Corps of the “DPR” as part of the Russian Armed Forces), where the influx of local youth can be provided by graduates of “Voin”. In addition to the army, it is possible to enlist in the Russian Guard (maintaining order in the occupied lands and fighting partisans)—there are also people with skills and ideological reliability. The long-term goal is to hold the Oblasts in submission. From the Kremlin’s point of view, by raising a new generation, completely loyal and blood-bound (through participation in the war), they are creating the foundation for the long-term maintenance of these territories. In 5-10 years, the “Voin Generation” should replace the current 30-40-year-olds, many of whom

remember life in Ukraine. Young people, raised in the militaristic Russian paradigm, will become soldiers, police officers, and officials of the occupation administration. Some of them can be used more widely, for example, sent to fight on other fronts. Cynically speaking, this is the formation of a caste of “free soldiers” for Russia from the local population, which characterizes the goal of the project.



Through a network of camps, Russia seeks to raise Ukrainian children as future military personnel and loyal citizens of the Russian Federation



In conclusion, the “Voin” center in the occupied territories is not so much about sports or children’s leisure as it is about a country program of militarization and Russification. Through a network of camps and clubs, Russia seeks to raise Ukrainian children as future military personnel and loyal citizens of the RF, uprooted and ready to serve the aggressor. This program is supported at the highest level, generously funded, and has already affected thousands of minors in Crimea, Donbas, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts. Its implementation is part of a strategy to integrate the occupied Oblasts of Ukraine by forming a new, pro-Russian generation associated with the security structures and ideology of the Russian country.

Youth control: tools for forming loyalty (in occupied territories of Ukraine, 2022-2025)

Children's military camps and youth organizations

The occupying authorities are actively recruiting children and adolescents into paramilitary organizations and camps in order to instill loyalty to the regime in them from an early age. Branches of Russian military-patriotic movements, primarily the “Youth Army,” have appeared in the occupied Oblasts of Ukraine since 2022 [53]. As early as November 2022, shortly after the occupation of part of the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts, the first patriotic education camps under the auspices of the “Youth Army” began to open there. For example, in Mariupol, the “Youth Army” headquarters conducted seven shifts in a children's camp in one summer of 2024, where Ukrainian children were taught to shoot Kalashnikov assault rifles. Similar structures are being created in other occupied Oblasts: in 2023, special “Youth Army houses” were opened in Donetsk and Luhansk—premises on the basis of schools for fire and combat training of young people. Not limited

to the “Youth Army”, the Russians are also planting new movements. In 2022, the Kremlin founded the all-Russian movement of children and youth “Movement of the Firsts”, and by 2025, its networks will cover tens of thousands of teenagers in the occupied territories. Thus, according to the statements of the Russian-supplied Gauleiter Yevgeny Balytsky, more than 19,000 children in the occupied part of the Zaporizhzhia Oblast have already joined the “Movement of the Firsts”, within the framework of which, 190 cells operate according to their place of residence. Through such structures, children are instilled with the cult of the occupiers and prepared for service in the Russian army. A key element of the program has become military sports games like the updated “Zarnytsia 2.0”, which, under the guise of team competitions, actually systematically prepare minors for war, brainwashing them and erasing their Ukrainian identity.



Military-patriotic education of children in the temporarily occupied territory of Ukraine

Key features of these militarized youth programs include:

- ▶ **Mass appeal of children to military-patriotic organizations:** the occupation administrations encourage schoolchildren to join the "Youth Army" or cadet classes from the 5th-6th grade. Officially, membership is considered voluntary, but in fact, pressure is exerted on children and schools: typical applications for membership are presented, demonstration receptions of new "Youth Army" members are organized, etc. By the end of 2024, it was planned, for example, to cover at least 10% of all Crimean schoolchildren with the "Youth Army".
- ▶ **Military training and camps:** children are taught how to handle weapons, tactics, and drill. In summer camps and military games, teenagers are taught to shoot, navigate, and act like soldiers. Active military personnel are regularly invited to camps—for example, in Crimea, lecturers from among the officers of the Black Sea Fleet and cadets of the naval school were invited to "patriotic changes" for schoolchildren. This normalizes the presence of the army in children's lives and makes military service attractive.
- ▶ **Ideological processing** through symbols and mentors: young participants of camps and clubs are instilled with pride in the Russian army. A case in point is that in October 2024, during a ceremony of dedication of preschoolers to the "Youth Army" near Rostov, veterans of the "special military operation" solemnly presented the kids with a model of the destroyed Bakhmut as a trophy. Such symbolic gestures glorify military aggression in the eyes of children. It is no coincidence that the "Youth Army" is often compared by observers to the "Hitler Youth" ("Hitlerjugend"), as it fosters fanatical loyalty through the militarization of childhood.

It is important to note that the Kremlin does not spare resources for this policy. The military-patriotic movement "Yunarmiya" is generously financed from the Russian budget—in 2025, almost 1 billion rubles was allocated, which is twice as much as a year earlier. These funds are used to deploy propaganda and infrastructure for working with youth, including in occupied territories. The movement is even involved in the deportation of Ukrainian children to Russia (for which it was subject to international sanctions). All these are facts that emphasize the role of "Yunarmiya" as an instrument of forced integration of Ukrainian children into the military-political space of the RF.



Military-political courses for youth, instilling narratives of the "Russian world"

Manipulation of patriotism and ideologization of school education

In addition to extracurricular organizations, the RF is radically restructuring the education system in the occupied territories, turning schools into a channel for ideological indoctrination. Under the slogans of “patriotic education,” a Russian curriculum is being introduced that glorifies the occupiers and eradicates everything related to Ukrainian identity. Such measures have been taken everywhere since the fall of 2022, when schools in the occupied areas were forcibly Russified. Human

Rights Watch has documented [54] that the occupation “authorities” are suppressing the use of the Ukrainian language, forcing students to switch to Russian textbooks, and imposing blatant anti-Ukrainian propaganda on students. The introduced Russian history curriculum justifies Russia’s invasion and portrays modern Ukraine as a “neo-Nazi country”—thus convincing children that the war against Ukraine is of a liberating, “patriotic” nature.



Manipulation of patriotism and ideologisation of schooling

Below are the key elements of this ideologization of childhood in school:

- **Forced Russification of curricula:** Russian officials are demanding that schools introduce new curricula and remove Ukrainian subjects. Ukrainian language and literature have been excluded from the compulsory curriculum: all textbooks in Ukrainian have been removed from classrooms. Even studying Ukrainian as an optional subject is extremely difficult: those who wish to do so are offered only poor-quality printouts instead of textbooks and untrained teachers. The goal is to tear children away from their native language and culture.

Below are the key elements of this ideologization of childhood in school:

- ▶ **Propaganda content of lessons:** *new textbooks instill loyalty to the RF in children. History is taught from the Kremlin's perspective: Russia's exploits, the denial of Ukrainian statehood, the thesis of "liberation from Nazism." Weekly "patriotic education" lessons have been introduced in primary schools throughout the occupation: starting in the 1st grade, children are gathered for "educational hours," where "veterans of the SMO" are invited to talk about their military path. From childhood, an image of Russia is formed as their "homeland," which they should be proud of and, if necessary, fight and die for.*
- ▶ **Patriotic rituals and symbols:** *daily ceremonies with Russian symbols have become mandatory in all schools. At the behest of the occupation administrations, every morning children raise the Russian flag and sing the Russian anthem before lessons. These rituals are an element of total control and insinuation of "correct" loyalty. Thus, the representative of the Ukrainian authorities Ivan Fedorov notes that "the zombification of our children... has reached its maximum level": the occupiers consider the mandatory raising of the tricolor and singing the anthem a guarantee of educating obedience. In addition, children are regularly involved in demonstrative patriotic actions: for example, teenagers are forced to hand out St. George (tricolor) ribbons, paint a tricolor on their faces with the slogan "Russia in the heart of everyone", participate in concerts dedicated to Russia Day, etc.—all under the supervision of the occupying authorities.*
- ▶ **Pressure on teachers and parents:** *fear is used to implement these measures. Teachers who refuse to switch to Russian standards are fired, expelled, detained, and even tortured. There are known cases of physical pressure on teachers who do not agree to teach propaganda materials, which violates international law. Parents are also intimidated: if a family tries to teach a child according to the Ukrainian curriculum online from home, the occupiers threaten with "measures." Thus, both teachers and parents are effectively forced to cooperate in the ideological indoctrination of children, fearing for their own safety.*

All these steps have one goal—to form in children the "correct" consciousness, in which loyalty to Russia and its regime is considered the highest virtue. The Kremlin manipulates the concept of patriotism, substituting love for one's true Motherland (Ukraine) for loyalty to the occupying power (Russia). By adolescence, many children in the occupied territories have a distorted picture of the world: they are taught that they are "little Russians", and Ukraine is alien and hostile to them. As a result, according to monitoring data, after two years of such treatment, some children in the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts are already repeating the propaganda theses themselves—talking about "the evil words of the Ukrainians who want to harm them", sincerely believing in the Kremlin's version of reality imposed on them.



Cadet Cossack Corps in the temporarily occupied territory of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions

Education by fear, control and punishment



"Filtration measures" in the teenage environment are designed to identify "unreliable" schoolchildren

Unconditional loyalty to the regime is achieved not only through propaganda, but also by suppressing any dissent among young people. An atmosphere of fear has been established in the occupied territories: children and adolescents are heavily monitored and severely punished for pro-Ukrainian views. Russian security forces are conducting intensified "filtration measures" in the teenage environment, identifying

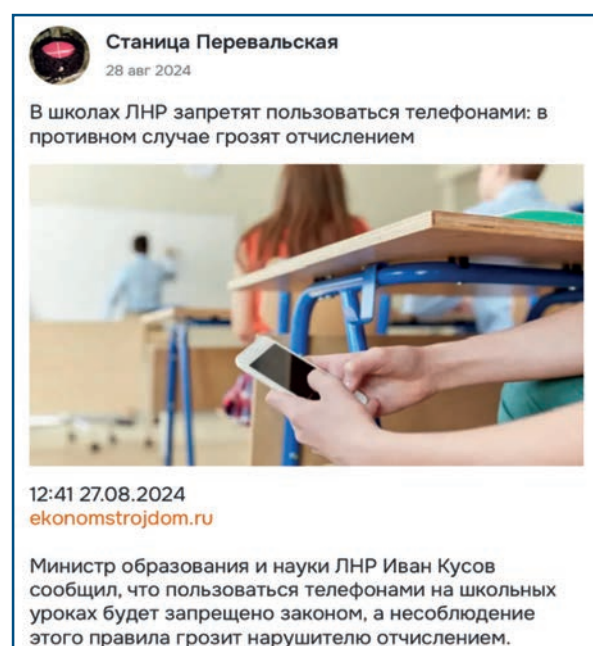
"unreliable" schoolchildren. According to the Center for National Resistance, in 2023 alone, 263 minors were registered in the occupied part of the Donetsk Oblast, 16 of whom were declared "extremists". This is primarily about children who were noticed in a pro-Ukrainian position. Such adolescents are sent by the occupiers for forced examinations or treatment in psychiatric institutions.

Below are facts that illustrate the tactics of intimidation and punishment of youth:

- ▶ **Labeling and criminal prosecution:** teenagers who show disloyalty (for example, who speak Ukrainian, listen to Ukrainian music, or criticize the RF) are first declared "difficult" or "radical," and then even "terrorists." According to Ukrainian Ombudsman Dmytro Lubinets, the occupation "law enforcement officers" bring criminal cases against such children, seeking to convict them in a show-like manner in order to intimidate the rest of their peers. In 2023, the occupiers prosecuted 161 minors in Donbas, accusing them of "extremism" or "radicalism."

- ▶ **Punitive psychiatry:** one of the most cynical practices has been the forced placement of "unreliable" children in psychiatric clinics. Russian security forces claim that teenagers with pro-Ukrainian views need to be "treated for extremism"—in fact, returning the methods of Soviet punitive psychiatry, but now against children. According to data provided by human rights activists, in 2024 alone, at least 63 teenagers in the occupied part of Donetsk Oblast were sent for forced psychiatric treatment as extremists. If a child refuses to accept the imposed ideology, the occupiers declare them sick and try to break their psyche with medication and isolation. The goal is to completely suppress the child's will and make them consent. Ukrainian human rights activists directly call this a war crime and a manifestation of fascism in relation to children. At the same time, an entire punitive system is involved: "treatment" is sought through controlled courts, decisions are made by occupation judges (most often, citizens of the RF), and executed by controlled "psycho-neurological institutions" together with security forces.
- ▶ **Demonstrative executions and violence:** in some cases, repressions reach the point of physical destruction of dissenting teenagers. The tragedy in occupied Berdyansk is illustrative: in the summer of 2023, 16-year-old Tigran Hovhannesian and Mykyta Khamanov were accused by the occupiers of preparing sabotage on the railway and extrajudicially killed—they were shot during detention without trial or investigation. The occupation authorities cynically called this the "liquidation of terrorists", refusing to hand over the bodies to their relatives. This case became a cruel example for intimidating other children, demonstrating that resistance can cost lives.
- ▶ **Total control in schools:** the school environment is militarized not only symbolically, but also through surveillance. Employees of occupation structures and even military personnel are often brought to schools to monitor the "ideological reliability" of students and teachers. Any non-compliance with "patriotic standards" (singing the anthem incorrectly, not wearing a uniform for an event, speaking Ukrainian during recess) can lead to serious consequences. Thus, the fear of punishment has become an integral part of the lives of children under occupation—it forces them to demonstrate ostentatious loyalty, even if their inner position is different.

Through a system of denunciations, intimidation, and punitive measures, the occupiers manage to keep the youth under constant control. Children learn that any deviation from the imposed line threatens trouble—that is why many are forced to participate in all propaganda campaigns and remain silent about their true feelings. Loyalty to the regime under such conditions becomes a matter of survival for them. As the Ukrainian Ombudsman notes, forced "treatment" and persecution of children for their views is a direct continuation of the policy of torture and an attempt to change their identity by force.



Checks are being carried out for signs of pro-Ukrainian activity among schoolchildren

The cult of the army and the ideology of the "great mission"

The central element of education during the occupation is the cult of the army and war, the glorification of Russian soldiers and the belief that children are involved in a "great patriotic mission". Propaganda deliberately draws parallels between the current aggression and the feat of the USSR in the so-called "Great Patriotic War", instilling that

Russia is "once again" saving the world from "Nazism" (although it did not save the world on its own in the WWII), and therefore, serving this war is "honorably" and "correct". In educational activities, children are constantly presented with the image of a Russian soldier-liberator and the participants of this "special military operation" are heroized.



The cult of the army and the ideology of the "great mission"

Here's how this cult and ideology is formed among young people:

- **The exaltation of military symbols and heroes:** children's events are saturated with military symbolism. Schoolchildren are told about the "feats of the Russian people" and the new "heroes of the SMO", praising their valor. At holidays, children sing songs about Russia, recite poems about the Motherland to visiting military personnel, and act out scenes from front-line life. Propaganda cultivates images such as "grandfathers-winners of fascism" and the continuity of generations, with the hint that today's Russian soldiers are the heirs to the glory of 1945. This forms in the child the belief that the army is the main pride of the people, and military service is the "highest calling".

- ▶ **Inspiring readiness for self-sacrifice:** starting from the junior grades, children are instilled with the values of militarized patriotism. They are taught to be ready to give their lives “for the Motherland”, to admire the “greatness of Russia” and to put country interests above their own. The stated goal of the “Youth Army” is directly formulated as raising a patriotic citizen loyal to the Motherland. In fact, as “CrimeaSOS” notes, children in the occupied territories are programmed from childhood to sacrifice themselves for the sake of imperial ambitions: they are brought up to admire “Russian greatness”, instill the image of Ukraine as an enemy and the idea of a sacred struggle against it. This is the ideology of the “great mission”, which justifies any sacrifices.
- ▶ **Public demonstration of loyalty to the regime:** the cult requires both internal convictions and open expressions of devotion from young people. Children regularly participate in mass actions that glorify the army and the country. For example, on Russia Day, June 12, 2024, children in all occupied regions were forced to sing the Russian anthem, dance, and star in propaganda videos for the Russian Guard. In some cities, teenagers were taken to the embankment to wave huge tricolor flags and sing songs like “We Are Millions of Russians” in chorus. These staged actions are passed off as outbursts of patriotism—occupation officials cynically declare that “it is nice to see the younger generation showing initiative and love for the Motherland.” In reality, such activity is carefully staged and forced, but it teaches children to show loyalty in public.
- ▶ **Oaths of allegiance and change of citizenship:** the culmination of the cultivation of loyalty was the mass imposition of Russian citizenship on teenagers. From the age of 14, children in the occupied territories begin to receive Russian passports, often solemnly. Only on June 12, 2024, 32 schoolchildren in the Zaporizhzhia Oblast, and more than 100 teenagers in the Donetsk Oblast received Russian passports. At the ceremonies, children must take an oath of allegiance to Russia and sing its anthem. Thus, they officially swear allegiance to the occupiers even before they reach adulthood. Passportization is not just a formality, but part of a strategy: first, to legally bind young people to the RF, and second, to psychologically confirm their new “Motherland”. It is known that along with passports, children are also given military certificates, hinting at future service—a full cycle of forming a “soldier of the empire.”

All these measures are united by a single ideology: to make the army and the country an object of worship for the new generation. Russian propaganda seeks to make young Ukrainians in the occupied lands perceive the war against Ukraine not as aggression, but as a “great mission”, in which they must participate themselves. In essence, children are being prepared to become ideologically motivated, obedient “universal soldiers” who will carry out any orders from the Kremlin. Human rights activists directly point out that the imposition of Russian culture, the forced Russification of education, the distribution of passports, and other similar steps are parts of a single genocidal policy of the RF aimed at changing the national identity of Ukrainian children.



Pledges of allegiance and change of citizenship are promoted among young people. The army and the state become objects of worship

Phone checks and surveillance of school students in the occupied territories (2024-2025)

Regular checks and ban on smartphones



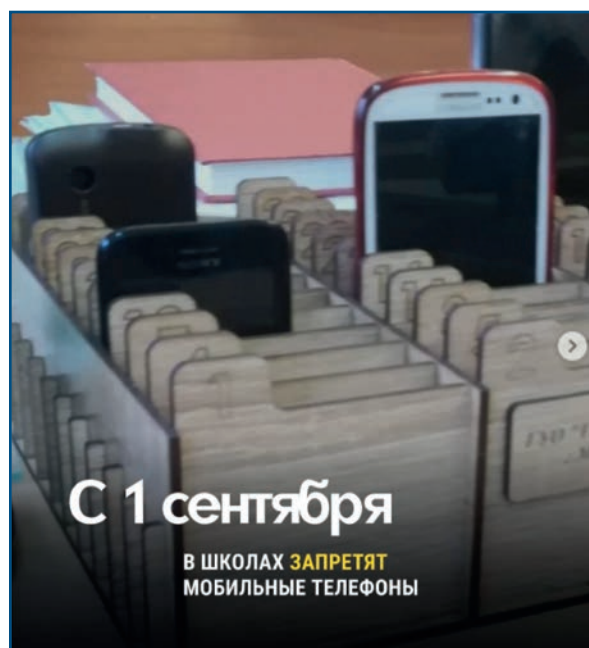
In the territories of Ukraine occupied by Russia, systematic checks of students' own phones have been established. According to human rights activists, in schools in the occupied Oblasts, they check the content of children's smartphones every week and prohibit the use of VPNs.

Officially, the occupation “administration” motivates this with concern for discipline: for example, in Melitopol, since the beginning of 2024, schoolchildren have been formally banned from using smartphones, supposedly for their own good, so that nothing distracts them from lessons.

However, parents see this as a different intention: to deprive children of the opportunity to call for help or record violations of their rights. In fact, schoolchildren are deprived of rights while they are at school, and everything that happens “behind closed doors” remains uncontrolled by anyone outside.

The practice of total control is widespread. In particular, in schools in the occupied part of the Kherson Oblast, volunteer teachers from the RF were directly instructed to check the contents of students' phones for the presence of “extremist applications”—primarily a Ukrainian electronic diary and a distance learning platform “Single School of Ukraine”.

In addition, inspectors are looking for signs of pro-Ukrainian activity on the devices: installed secure messengers like Signal, interface language, time zone and other settings that indicate a connection to the Ukrainian space. Similar raids were carried out throughout the south: the occupation authorities organized raids on the



In schools in the temporarily occupied territory of Ukraine, students will be banned from using phones

homes of families whose children did not go to a Russian school. During such visits, parents were required to show their phones for the presence of Ukrainian educational applications, making sure that the child was not secretly studying according to the Ukrainian curriculum. Adults were threatened with deprivation of parental rights, and FSB officers spoke with them separately for educational purposes.

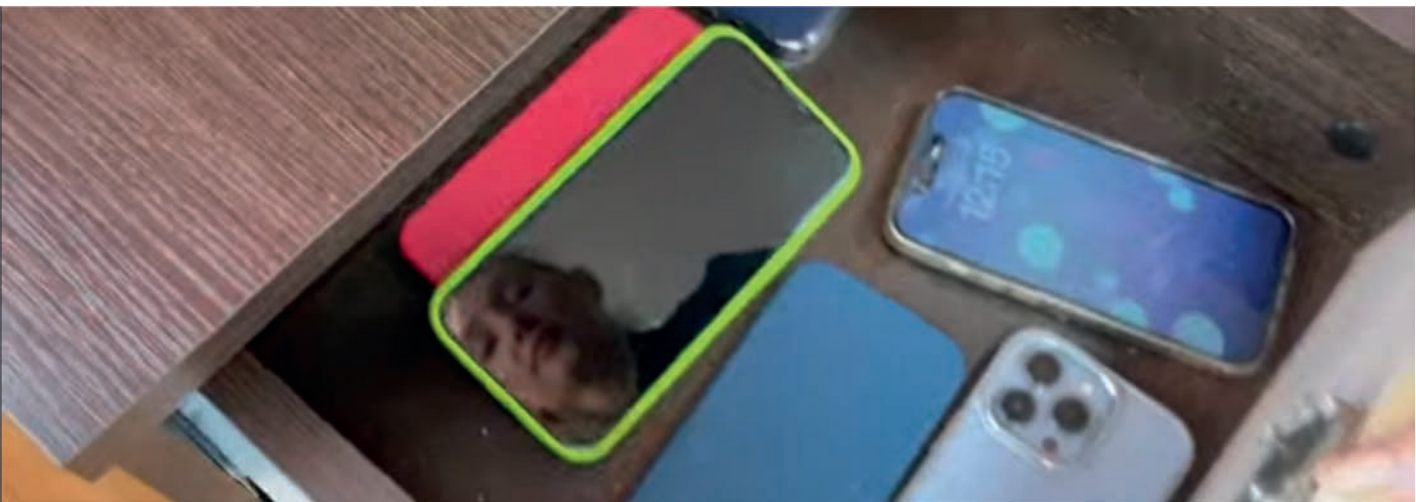
Guardians and pressure in schools

To strengthen ideological supervision, Moscow has introduced special positions in schools in the occupied territories: the so-called "childhood navigators" [55]. These are, as a rule, advisers to principals on education and ideology sent from the RF, who are supposed to "rewrite" the minds of children and instill a Russian identity in them. Their tasks include organizing propaganda excursions, showing pseudo-patriotic films, military sports games, and involving schoolchildren in Kremlin's youth movements. Such curators report to the

occupation administration about every step they take; moreover, they form lists of "loyal" students and report them to others. It is these "patriotic guardians" who often supervise phone checks in schools. For example, in one of the Melitopol schools, curators demanded that children hand in their mobile phones and write down passwords on paper. Smartphones were collected in special boxes with the names of the owners, and access to the devices remained with the school administration and ideological mentors.



One high school student refused to give out the password—and immediately received a threat from the "patriotic Deputy Director": "If you don't do what they said, your parents will be called. And they won't be called to school at all. So decide—do you want to go to the shelter?" Under the threat of handing over the family to the "authorities", the teenager had to comply and reveal the contents of the phone.



Schools in the occupied territories are conducting regular inspections and banning smartphones

After this incident, many Melitopol students stopped bringing mobile phones to school altogether, but they have to prove the absence of a phone at the cost of personal searches—up to having their pockets turned over when entering.

Reports on “disloyal” and intervention by special services

By the end of 2024, the repressive campaign against “unreliable” children had become even more active. Anonymous reporting boxes appeared in schools, where students were encouraged to drop notes about “disloyal” classmates or even their parents. These measures were presented as propaganda under the guise of “fighting extremism” among young people. During special “lessons,” police or FSB representatives explained to children that they should report anyone who

expressed pro-Ukrainian views or criticized the occupation authorities. The school was to pass on all collected “signals” to the FSB. Moreover, administrations were ordered to independently compile lists of students considered disloyal and send this data to higher-ups. “Unreliable” teenagers are practically being registered. The further fate of children suspected of pro-Ukrainian sentiments is decided by law enforcement agencies.



For example, in Mariupol in 2024, the occupiers put 263 teenagers on special registration, 16 of whom were declared “extremists” (as explained, this category mainly included children with pro-Ukrainian views). Such minors are forcibly sent for psychiatric examination, or even for “treatment” in special institutions. There are known cases when, after the discovery of “compromising material” on a schoolchild’s phone or a denunciation from a teacher, children were taken away for interrogation by FSB officers. In such situations, parents are no longer summoned to school, but directly to the occupation “commandant’s office” or the “MDB” department.



Checking students' phones for "extremist apps"

In some settlements, the occupation police and pro-Russian Cossack squads patrol schools, controlling that students do not wear Ukrainian symbols and do not distribute photos or videos of Ukrainian troops. Teenagers caught subscribing to pro-Ukrainian Telegram channels or chatbots are reported to the special services—they face at least preventive registration, and criminal cases are not excluded for accusations of “extremism” or “collusion with the Armed Forces of Ukraine.” According to the Eastern Human Rights Group, in October 2024 alone, security forces in the occupied territories opened 231 cases against local residents, many of them against minors accused of resisting the occupation.

Reaction of children and parents

Residents of the occupied Oblasts are trying to resist the pressure as best they can. Some schoolchildren are trying to hide or not take the banned phones with them at all, avoiding frank conversations and deleting correspondence. Parents in Melitopol were publicly outraged by the ban on smartphones, indicating that children are deprived of communication and cannot report problems. However, the occupation authorities are ignoring the opinions of local families—as propagandists cynically noted, "In a totalitarian country, the opinion of the peasants is of no interest to anyone." The Ukrainian authorities and human rights activists are calling for every such case to be recorded. The Center for National Resistance warns that everyone involved in the persecution of children (collaborationist teachers, directors and curators) will be punished under Ukrainian law. International organizations regard what is happening as a gross violation of children's rights. The Human Rights Watch report explicitly states

that the imposition of the Russian education system and ideology on the occupied territories—along with total censorship and surveillance of students—violates international standards. In particular, the occupation practices violate the Convention on the Rights of the Child: the right of children to learn in their native (Ukrainian) language is violated; the right of parents to choose the form of education, and the coercion to report and militaristic propaganda in schools contradict the ban on involving minors in conflicts. Human Rights Watch and a number of Ukrainian NGOs are demanding that independent observers be allowed into schools in the occupied territories, but Russia ignores all these appeals. However, recording such cases—from mass searches of phones to the transfer of "disloyal" teenagers to the FSB—plays an important role: this testimony will form the basis of future national or international tribunals and will allow those responsible for repressions against children to be held accountable.



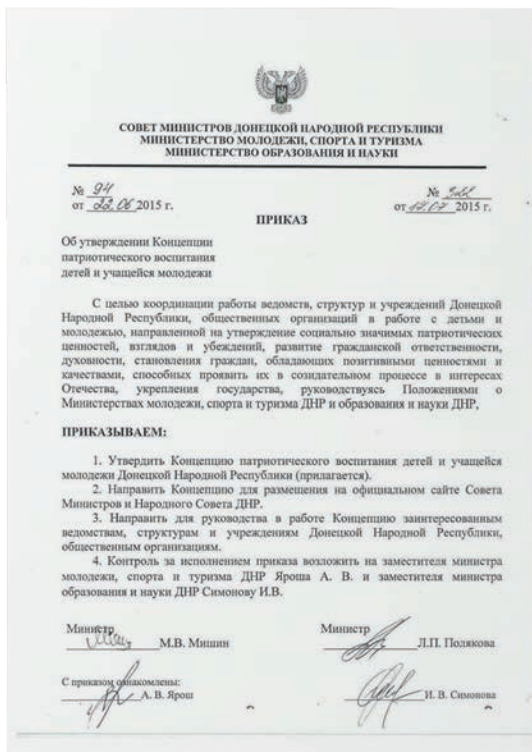
Conclusion. *In the period 2022-2025, a holistic system of militarization and control of youth has developed in the occupied territories of Ukraine. Through militarized camps, ideologically charged education, intimidation, and the cult of war, the Russian regime forms in children unconditional loyalty to the authoritarian government. Children grow up in conditions where patriotism means devotion to Putin and his army, and their own Ukrainian identity is suppressed by fear and propaganda. Such ideologizing of childhood has a dual purpose: on the one hand, to raise a new generation of obedient citizens for the integration of the occupied lands into Russia, and on the other, to prepare "cannon fodder" for future wars. International observers and human rights activists are unanimous in the opinion that these practices grossly violate the rights of the child and the norms of international law. The militarization and "brainwashing" of children is one of the most disturbing tools for maintaining the occupation government, the consequences of which Ukrainian society will have to overcome for many years after de-occupation.*

Hate propaganda in schools of occupied territories (2024-2025)

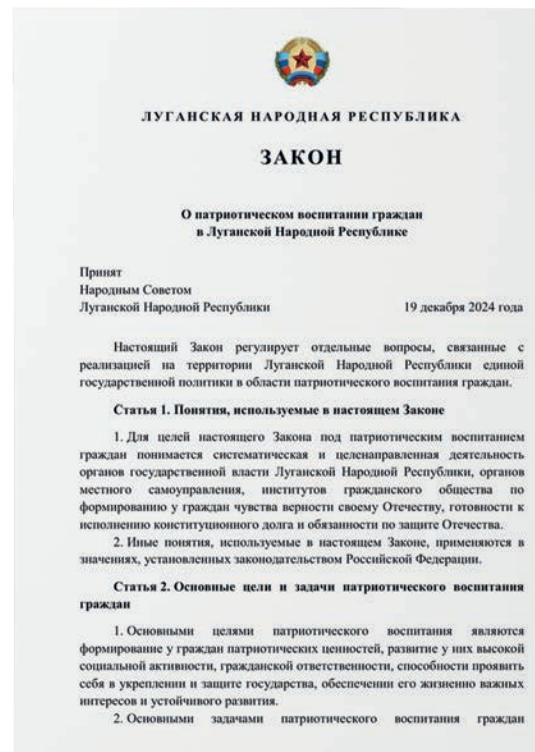
The Russian occupation authorities systematically use education in the occupied territories of Ukraine (Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, Zaporizhzhia Oblasts, and Crimea) to ideologically indoctrinate children. A distorted picture of the world is imposed on schoolchildren, where the West, NATO and the European Union are enemies, and democratic values are a danger. Through school programs, extracurricular activities, camps and propaganda campaigns, children are instilled with a militant ideology that justifies war and forms hostility towards Ukraine and the entire "Western world". Such indoctrination is accompanied by the suppression of Ukrainian identity: the Ukrainian language and symbols are banned and the cult of Russian statehood is promoted. The key aspects of this process and its impact on the consciousness of adolescents in 2024-2025 are considered below.



Literature distributed among young people



Order on the approval of patriotic education in the occupied Donetsk region



Law adopted in the "LPR", approving the principles of patriotic education among youth

Hostility towards the West, NATO and the EU through education

The educational process deliberately incorporates images of an "external enemy". New Russian history textbooks, brought to schools in the occupied territories, directly declare that "the Western world consists of enemies" who oppose Russia. Schoolchildren are explained that the so-called "special military operation" is a forced and heroic measure of defense, and Vladimir Putin is portrayed as the savior of the world from evil. At the same time, Ukraine itself is called in these books an "ultranationalist country," allegedly invented by the Austrian General Staff, and even a "neo-Nazi country," that is, they actually equate Ukrainians with Nazis, justifying the Russian invasion (although Russia is actually Nazi today). Such rhetoric instills in children the idea that NATO, the EU, and the West in general are the original aggressors and enemies of Russia, who are behind the conflict in Ukraine. For example, textbooks interpret the events of Euromaidan and



The Federal Youth Center has launched a network of youth patriotic clubs



Hostility towards Western culture, the EU and NATO is being shaped through school curriculum materials

other Ukrainian revolutions as "coups organized by Western intelligence services," rather than popular uprisings against corruption. Thus, any pro-European aspirations and cooperation with NATO are presented to children as the result of hostile Western intrigues.

Propaganda in schools is reinforced by extracurricular activities. In occupied Crimea, Donbas, and in the territories captured in 2022, "patriotism lessons" are regularly held, classroom hours, and lectures where military or propagandists talk about external enemies. The Federal Youth Center, created within the structure of the Russian Ministry of Education, has deployed a network of youth clubs in the new occupied territories: they hold "patriotic seminars" and military sports games designed to "erase the Ukrainian past" of children and instill in them the image of a "friendly" Russia. These same centers convey to teenagers the idea that the USA, Europe, and NATO want to destroy their future, and Russia "protects" them. Similar ideas are also broadcast through children's events: military exhibitions (where children pose against the backdrop of Russian symbols), competitions, and thematic "conversations about important things." As a result, a clear attitude is formed among young residents of the occupation: there are enemies all around (the West and Ukraine), and Russia is the only defender.

Democratic values as “threats” to children

In parallel with the education of hatred for external enemies, the foundations of a democratic society are being blackened. Freedom of speech, human rights, equality, and fair elections are presented not as achievements, but as a source of chaos and threats. In occupied schools, children are taught that any protests and change of power are evil: for example, Ukrainian independence is presented in textbooks as a historical mistake and an accident, and the 2014 Revolution of Dignity is the result of a conspiracy by the West, and not an expression of the will of the people. This discredits the very idea of the people's choice and democracy.



Caricatures. Demonstration to create an image of the enemy



The occupation "methods" for teachers also contain signs of demonization of law and freedom. According to an investigation by Meduza, Russian teachers received manuals that list the "wrong" views of Ukrainian teenagers—for example, the slogan "Glory to Ukraine" is included in the list of extremist manifestations. Their task is to "re-educate" children on the basis of the "spiritual and moral values of the RF," effectively eradicating everything associated with Western liberal thought. Democratic principles have no place in these values: critical thinking is suppressed, and instead obedience and respect for the authority are instilled.



Caricatures. Demonstration to create an image of the enemy

Free expression of opinion or disagreement is stigmatized as a dangerous influence from the outside. As a result, democracy appears to schoolchildren as something undesirable—a synonym for anarchy and decline. For example, freedom of speech is interpreted as a tool of the “information war of the West,” human rights as a cover for interference in internal affairs, equality as the imposition of a foreign (including LGBT) ideology, and elections as a show run by the West. Occupation officials openly declare that “we do not need foreign democracy,” instilling in children the idea of the dominance of “traditional values” and an authoritarian model. Thus, in the minds of schoolchildren, democratic values are formed as an existential threat that destroys their homeland from within.

“The image of the enemy” in the educational process

The formation of enemy images permeates the entire education system in the occupied territories—from textbooks to camps. School textbooks and manuals are full of military propaganda. In new Russian history books for grade 11, introduced in Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, and Crimea, the war against Ukraine is justified as a “defensive action by Russia,” and the invasion is called “forced.” The occupation of Crimea is presented as a legitimate “reunification.” Ukraine is purposefully demonized—it is called a “neo-Nazi country” where genocide of Russian-speakers is allegedly reigning. This mythology of the enemy is built into the curriculum. In addition to the content of the textbooks, the very organization of school life is saturated with militarism and attributes of hostility.



Caricatures. Demonstration to create an image of the enemy



“Heroes’ Desks” have appeared in many schools (memorial desks with the names of pro-Russian militants who died in the war, boards of honor of “heroes of the SMO”), stands with Putin’s quotes (for example, this is how the foyer of school No. 2 in the village of Manhush near Mariupol was decorated).

For example, in the occupied areas, children sing the Russian anthem in formation every morning under the supervision of the military—there was a recorded case in the Kherson Oblast, where the school principal forced students and teachers to perform the Russian anthem every day to the raising of the tricolor. Five-minute propaganda sessions are held during shifts and class hours, where they praise the Russian army and slander “Ukrainian nationalists” or “Anglo-Saxons”.



КОЛЛАБОРАНТЫ ВОЙНЫ

Caricatures. Demonstration to create an image of the enemy

Thematic competitions and exhibitions are almost always associated with militarism: children are massively involved in drawing posters “We are against NATO”, making products for the front, writing letters to soldiers with calls to kill “Nazis”. There are known cases when students who refused to write letters of support to the Russian military were punished with lower grades—teachers directly stated that this was payback for “not being patriotic”.



Caricatures. Demonstration to create an image of the enemy

The occupiers also actively use extracurricular formations and camps to instill an image of the enemy. In 2024, the Russian authorities increased funding for the so-called "patriotic education" by 20 times—almost 45.8 billion rubles are directed to summer camps, propaganda events, military-educational programs and other tools for the militarization of children. In these camps (including in Crimea and the Krasnodar Krai), Ukrainian children are placed in military units, taught basic military training, marching with weapons, singing military songs and shouting slogans against the West. In fact, there is a "zombification" of minors in an atmosphere of militarism. At the same time, children's and youth organizations such as Yunarmiya operate—according to human rights activists, by 2024, more than 35,000 children in the occupied regions will have joined the ranks of Yunarmiya, and this number is steadily growing. In these groups, children are instilled with unconditional loyalty to the army and a willingness to fight against the "enemies of the Motherland" in the future. It is important that the occupation authorities use not only printed materials, but also multimedia manuals and oral propaganda. Films and videos that distort current events are shown in schools: for example, videos of "facts of NATO/USA atrocities" are

shown, cartoons where Russian heroes fight the insidious West, etc. "Lecturers" (often military personnel, employees of occupation administrations or propagandists) come to classes to tell children their versions of history, where the USA and Europe have been conspiring against Donbas and Crimea for many years. As a result, the image of the enemy has been introduced at all levels of the educational process: from the content of lessons to rituals and the environment of schoolchildren. This creates an isolated information field in children, saturated with hatred of "external threats."



КОМУ НЕ НУЖЕН МИР

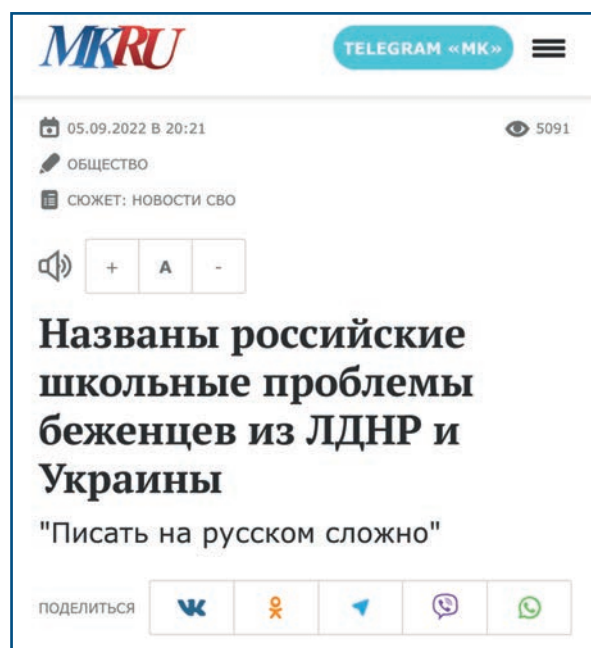
Caricatures. Demonstration to create an image of the enemy

Impact on adolescents' perception and emotional development

Instilling hatred at such a young age already has significant consequences for the psyche of children. Human rights activists note that during the occupation in the Crimea, an entire generation grew up who knew no information other than propaganda: children who were 7-8 years old during the seizure of the peninsula in 2014 are now teenagers 16-17 years old and they all became “victims of education with a fake history.”

These teenagers were forced to grow up in an “alternative reality, where Crimea is Russia, and Ukraine is an enemy country.” The views formed in this way are very difficult to change: young people are most often aggressive, support war and violence, sincerely believing in the images of enemies instilled in them from childhood. Experts warn that in the future, the reintegration of these territories will be complicated by the need to “dezombify” young people, to re-teach them real history. In addition to a distorted worldview, direct psychological trauma is also recorded. Almost all children living under occupation experience constant psychological violence, notes psychologist Natalia Sosnovenko.

Pressure at school, fear of punishment for “wrong” opinions, military guidelines—all this creates an atmosphere of anxiety and stress. Children are afraid to deviate from the imposed norm, many become close in themselves.



Pressure on schoolchildren in the occupied territories

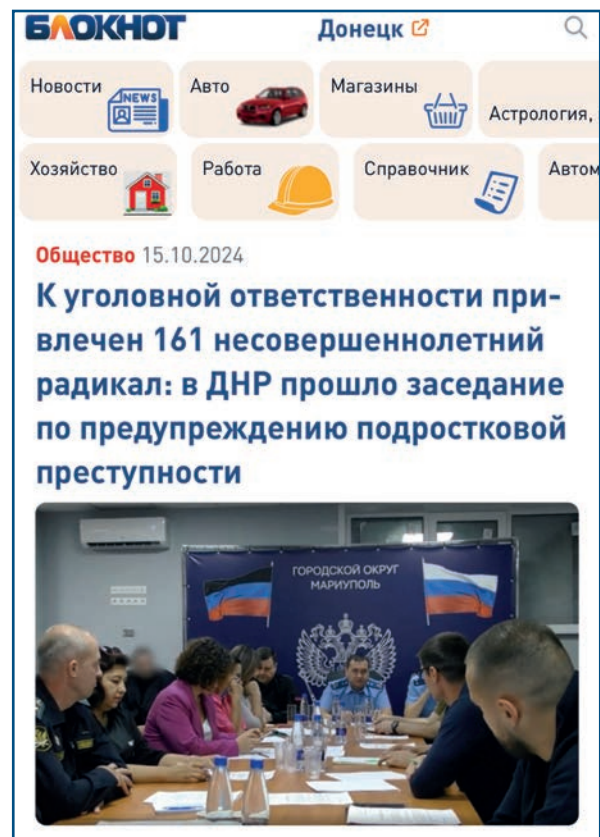


An example is the story of a Crimean schoolboy Bohdan: after 2014, when his school in Crimea switched to Russian rules, teachers demanded that he speak only Russian, ridiculing the Ukrainian language ("We don't understand you, maybe you'll switch to Russian?"). Classmates teased the boy as a "separatist" for his devotion to Ukrainian identity. For 5 years, Bohdan hid from his parents that he was being bullied, and only in safety (after leaving for the controlled territory) did he tell, bursting into tears, what he had to go through. This case shows what an oppressive psychological climate prevails among those children who do not fit into the framework of propaganda. Teenagers in the occupied lands often suffer from anxiety, depression, and they have increased aggressiveness or apathy—as a reaction to prolonged pressure and ambiguity.

Experts note that imposing hatred on minors undermines the basic values of tolerance and empathy. Forms of indoctrination that foster intolerance and hatred not only traumatize the psyche, but also violate the fundamental rights of the child. The moral development of such children is distorted: evil and cruelty towards the enemies of the "Motherland" begin to be perceived by them as the norm or even a virtue.

Human rights activists classify such actions as criminal: forcing children to love another's army and hate "enemies" may actually fall under the concept of a war crime (propaganda for service in the army of the occupiers and incitement to enmity). In addition, there is a risk that in a few years, these teenagers will be involved in the war—after all, they are already being trained to be soldiers. The Russian administration does not hide that it views the youth of the occupied territories as a mobilization resource: schools require lists of 17-18-year-old students in order to draft them into the Russian army in the future.

Finally, it should be noted the rupture of family and cultural ties, which affects children's emotions. The ban on the Ukrainian language, traditions, suppression of national memory—all this causes some teenagers to experience internal conflict and a sense of loss of their "self". Many children who left the occupation need serious psychological support. Ukraine has



Criminal prosecution of minors

already started rehabilitation programs: according to the Ministry of Health, special courses are being developed for the integration of displaced schoolchildren who have been influenced by Russian propaganda.



However, the scale of the problem is enormous—we are talking about hundreds of thousands of children. In fact, an entire generation in the eastern regions of Ukraine is growing up with distorted emotional development, where instead of trust and humanism, fear, hatred, or fanatical loyalty to the regime have been instilled.

Specific examples

Case 1 Lessons of "courage" in Mariupol.

In occupied Mariupol, armed Russian soldiers came to schools and conducted so-called "courage lessons." At these meetings, children were shown equipment and described ways to defeat the "enemy," including stories about using UAV strikes against Ukrainians. Some events were accompanied by symbolic militarization: children were dressed in uniforms, St. George ribbons were used, and combat elements were arranged in school classrooms. The school was transformed into a playground where war was presented as a normal and exemplary practice.

Case 2 "Lessons of Patriotism" as a justification for violence.

In the temporarily occupied territories, "patriotism lessons" were introduced, the content of which included theses about the permissibility of killing the "enemy", as well as dehumanizing formulas—"they are not people, they are the enemy". Teenagers were taught the idea of personal responsibility for defending the Motherland, tying moral assessments to participation in the war. The material was presented in conjunction with military symbols, rituals and media stories about "exploits". Such a combination reinforced the black-and-white perception among schoolchildren and normalized violence as the "rightful" act.

Case 3 Mass "lessons" under the supervision of the administration.

In parallel with regular classes, representatives of the occupation administrations and "educational advisors" came to the school, forming a vertical of control over the content and tone of extracurricular activities. At these events, propaganda messages about "the just war", "defense" and "liberation" were systematically reproduced, and the participation of military delegations made the presence of security forces in the school habitual. Mandatory rituals were built into the schedule: raising the flag, singing the anthem, thematic conversations, as well as events with the participation of veterans and security forces. As a result, the school lost its neutrality and became a channel for political mobilization.

Case 4 Girl in an embroidered shirt: harassment and threats to the family.

At TOT, a 15-year-old student wore a Ukrainian embroidered shirt and engaged in discussions with teachers, after which she faced systematic harassment and physical attacks from her peers. Teachers wrote denunciations against her family; her mother was threatened with deprivation of parental rights for "incorrect" upbringing. In related episodes, a 15-year-old schoolgirl was interrogated for several hours for pro-Ukrainian comments online, a 17-year-old teenager was threatened with forced conscription, and families with children aged 4 and 8 were threatened with expulsion if they refused to attend a "Russian" school. These cases record pressure aimed at suppressing Ukrainian identity and forcing a demonstration of loyalty.

Case 5 **Twins Nikita and Denis, 14 years old (Donetsk): transfer to the cadet corps of the Russian Armed Forces.**

After a call from school, relatives were forced to sign the documents, and the boys were taken to the RF without exams, enrolling in the cadet corps of the Investigative Committee. The training regime included barracks discipline, drill and mandatory rituals: raising the flag, singing the anthem, participating in parades. The passport was personally handed to one of the teenagers by the Head of the law enforcement agency, which emphasized the politicized nature of "education". Such "profiling" forms in children a strong attachment to the law enforcement service and loyalty to the occupation structures.

Case 6 **Vladyslav Chychkan, a youth soldier from Horlivka: military practices and "heroic" everyday life.**

A teenager from the Youth Army of Olga Kachura Unit describes his first classes: tactical medicine, drill, discussion of "modern conflicts," participation in ceremonies and marches. At city festivals, children were allowed to try on military equipment, were introduced to weapon models, and "heroes" were demonstrated. In public statements, the teenager formulates his readiness to "serve the Motherland," which reflects the successful assimilation of a military identity. These practices are established as socially approved forms of activity for schoolchildren.

Case 7 **Oksana (teenager): Armed guards at the entrance and forced rituals.**

The mother reported that an armed guard sat at the entrance to the school, checking children's backpacks every day, and soldiers walked the corridors. Ukrainian language and literature were excluded from the school curriculum, and students were required to sing the Russian national anthem and participate in flag-raising ceremonies every day. The constant presence of security forces and the ritualization of the educational process changed the atmosphere of the school, making it a space of control rather than development. For children, this meant constant stress and the suppression of national and cultural identity.

Financing of militarization and indoctrination of children by the RF government

- **2020: ≥0.35 billion roubles (minimum according to the country program; +34 million roubles of additional funding)**
 - **2021: 3.4 billion roubles (fact)**
 - **2022: 11.4 billion roubles (fact)**
 - **2023: 39.7 billion roubles (plan)**
 - **2024: 45.85-46.0 billion roubles (plan/approved)**
 - **2025: 66.63 billion roubles (draft budget).**
- (Data taken from officially published data of the RF country budget).*

From 2024 to 2025, new facts continue to emerge about how the Russian authorities are turning the education system into a tool of war in the occupied territories of Ukraine. Through school and extracurricular activities, the image of the enemy—the collective West and democratic Ukraine—is purposefully constructed in the minds of children, while at the same time cultivating the cult of Russia's "liberation" mission. This policy causes long-term damage to children's psyches and worldviews. Human rights activists describe such practices as a form of forced Russification and military propaganda that

violates international law. Many generations of Ukrainian children have already fallen victim to such informational flow, and there will be a long work ahead to psychologically restore them to transform their views. In the meantime, the occupation regime, using fear and lies, seeks to turn current schoolchildren into future soldiers and loyal citizens who see the enemy in the free world. The international community and Ukraine are carefully documenting these cases in order to hold perpetrators accountable and develop programs to assist children who have experienced ideological violence.

Conclusions

The results of the analysis of the educational policy of the RF in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine indicate that in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, the Russian government prioritizes and most generously finances the ideological and military training of minors, building a stable infrastructure of mobilization socialization (via OBZH, "Yunarmiya", clubs, camps, and "Voin" centers). At the same time, according to a consolidated estimate, at least 500,000 children have already undergone one form or another of initial military training at TOT; in addition, the increase in specialized capacities is recorded: at the beginning of 2025, more than 1,100 "Voin" cadets were studying in the "new

Oblasts", more than 15,000 throughout the RF, and the official recruitment plan for 2025 is at least 35,000; a stationary "Voin" training camp is being built in Mariupol (the fourth at TOT). Along with this, forms of moral and physical violence against children have been documented: the constant presence of armed people in schools, forced loyalty rituals, ideological coercion and dehumanization of the "enemy", harassment and beatings for Ukrainian symbols, long-term interrogations, threats of abduction of children, cases of forced psychiatric hospitalization, forced transfers of adolescents to cadet corps in the RF, regular examinations and checks of backpacks, admission of minors to handling weapons and military training.



Taken together, this confirms that the RF is preparing children for a new military conflict, not only by financing the training infrastructure, but also through systemic violence and psychological pressure, which grossly violates the norms of human rights and the rights of the child and carries long-term risks for the security and future of Ukrainian society.

Recommendations to the government of Ukraine

Deindoctrination of children and restoration of consciousness after occupation

- › *Develop a national program for the de-ideologization and rehabilitation of children who have been subjected to systemic propaganda, militarization, and psychological violence.*
- › *Create specialized centers for post-occupational support for children: with the participation of teachers, psychologists, neuropsychologists, and specialists in cognitive trauma.*
- › *Restore Ukrainian educational identity through individual work with students who have formed hostile attitudes, as well as through programs to restore critical thinking.*

Creating alternative content and media platforms

- › *Initiate a country multimedia platform (analogous to YouTube Kids) aimed at schoolchildren from the occupied territories: animations, films, comics, series, podcasts—with pro-Ukrainian, humanistic, and anti-war content.*
- Release interactive educational products: games, quests, video courses, where war is presented as a tragedy, and democracy as the path to freedom, and not a “threat,” as the RF presents it.*
- › *Involve Ukrainian and Western authors, designers, producers, TikTok and YouTube bloggers in content creation to produce an attractive and competitive media agenda.*

Digital protection and access to information

- › *Create an infrastructure of secure digital channels for schoolchildren on TOT: offline content distribution (on flash drives, mobile apps), work with VPN, hidden Telegram channels, and work to disseminate alternative information by all means available.*
- › *Develop and disseminate educational materials on media literacy and propaganda recognition adapted for adolescents, including in game formats.*
- › *Implement the initiative to create a hotline for psychological support for children who have faced repression, confiscation of phones, and pressure from “ideological advisors.”*

Reaction of NATO and international partners

- › *Include the topic of mass militarization of children in the occupied territories in NATO reports on hybrid aggression and cognitive warfare.*
- › *Create a special program within NATO to counter military propaganda against minors as one of the key tools in preparing for future wars.*
- › *Initiate, with the support of NATO countries, an expert platform on the de-ideologization of children, where rehabilitation methods, counter-narratives, and educational products for the post-occupation period will be developed.*

Strengthening defense: Russia is preparing children for war—NATO must prepare now

- › *Recognize that the RF is pursuing a long-term strategy of preparing a new generation for military conflict, including through the school system, cadet corps, and mass psychological indoctrination.*
- › *NATO and allies should strengthen military support for Ukraine, understanding that a generation of “Putin’s soldiers” is being formed today, and they will become participants in future escalations.*
- › *Strengthen the humanitarian component of defense: support Ukraine in developing counter-propaganda mechanisms, technical solutions, and educational reintegration of youth.*

Promoting ideological consensus in Europe: Russia is the enemy

- › *Use the materials of this report to form a new pan-European humanitarian policy based on the recognition of the RF as an existential threat to the democratic world.*
- › *Launch a broad international campaign in NATO and EU countries: “Russia militarizes children: it is a crime against humanity,” demonstrating the evidence recorded in the report.*
- › *To seek political recognition of the mass militarization and ideological mobilization of children as an element of genocide against the Ukrainian people and a threat to international security.*

General conclusion

1. The education system in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine has been transformed by the RF into an instrument of ideological violence aimed at destroying Ukrainian identity and forming loyalty to the occupying regime.
2. Children and adolescents are subjected to targeted militarization: they are being molded into future soldiers, imposing a cult of war, an image of the enemy in the person of Ukraine, NATO, the EU, and the West, as well as an ideology of subordination to the aggressor country.
3. The facts of the functioning of educational institutions with a militarized bias have been documented: cadet corps, Cossack classes, military-patriotic clubs and camps where minors receive military training and undergo ideological indoctrination.
4. Against the backdrop of propaganda, cases of repression against children are recorded: confiscation of phones, surveillance, encouragement to report, forced psychiatric treatment, and pressure from so-called "ideological advisors."
5. The current situation requires an immediate response from the Ukrainian country and international partners through legal prosecution of the organizers of this system, protection of affected children, and creation of de-ideologization mechanisms.
6. The data presented in the report provide grounds for the assertion that the RF is deliberately using education as a tool to prepare minors to participate in a full-scale war, which is a gross violation of international humanitarian law.

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